In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمْ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيراً﴾

Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.

(Sūrat al-Aḥzāb 33:33)

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both in Sunnī and Shī'ah authoritative reference books of ḥadīth and tafsīr (exegesis of the Qur'an) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [ahl al-kisā'], viz. Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭimah, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn ('a) as the Ahl al-Bayt (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references:

Sunnī: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH), al-Musnad, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (d. 261 AH), 7:130; Al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 AH), Sunan, 5:361 et al. ; Al-Dūlābī (d. 310 AH), Al-Dhuriyyah al-Ṭāhirah al-Nabawiyyah, p. 108; Al-Nasā'ī (d. 303 AH), Al-Sunan al-Kubrā', 5:108; 113; Al-Ḥakīm al-Nayshābūrī (d. 405 AH), Al-Mustadrak'ala' ṣ-Ṣaḥīḥāyn, 2:416, 3:133, 146-147; Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH), Al-Burhān, p. 197; Ibn Hājar al-Asqalānī (d. 852 AH), Fatḥ al-BarīSharḥṢaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 7:104.

Shī'ah: Al-Kulaynī (d. 328 AH), Uṣūl al-Kāfī, 1:287; Ibn Babawayh (d. 329 AH), Al-Imāmahwa' t-Tabṣīrah, p. 47, ḥadīth 29; Al-Maghribī (d. 363 AH), Da'ā'im al-Islām, pp. 35, 37; Al-Ṣādūq (d. 381 AH), Al-Khiṣāl, pp. 403, 550; Al-Ṭūsī (d. 460 AH), Al-Amalī, ḥadīth 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of tafsīr: Al-Jassās (d. 370 AH), Aḥkām al-Qur'ān; Al-Wāḥidī (d. 468 AH), Asbāb al-Nuzūl; Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH), Zād al-Masīr; Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān; Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH), Tafsīr; Al-Tha'labī (d. 825 AH), Tafsīr; Al-Ṭabarī (d. 875 AH), Tafsīr; Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH), Al-Durr al-Manthūr; Al-Shawkānī (d. 1250 AH), Fatḥ al-Qadīr; Al-'Ayyāshī (d. 320 AH), Tafsīr; Al-Qummī (d. 329 AH), Tafsīr; Furāt al-Kūfī (d. 352 AH), Tafsīr at the margin of the exegesis of Sūrat al-Nisā' verse 59; Al-Ṭabarsī (d. 560 AH), Majma' al-Bayān, as well as many other sources.

CHARTER OF STATESMANSHIP BY IMAM ALI (‘A)

قال رسول الله ﷺ:

"إني تاركٌ فيكُمُ الثَقلين: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهلَ بيتي، ما إن تمسكتُم بهما لن تضلوا أبداً وأنَّهُما لَن يَفترِقا حتّى يردا عَليَّ الحوضَ"

The Messenger of Allah (*ṣ*) said: "Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [*thaqalayn*]: The Book of Allah and my progeny [*'itratī*], the members of my Household [*AhlaBayti*]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [*ḥawḍ*] (of *Kawthar*)."

Some references:

Al-Ḥākiman-Nayshābūrī, *Al-Mustadrak'alā'ṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533

Muslim, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (English translation), book 31, *ḥadīth*s5920-3

At-Tirmidhī, *Aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, *ḥadīth*s 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219

An-Nasā'ī, Khaṣā'iṣ'Alī ibn AbīṬālib, ḥadīth 79

AḥmadibnḤanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190

Ibn al-'Athīr, *Jāmi'al-Uṣūl*, vol. 1, p. 277

IbnKathīr, *Al-Bidāyahwa'n-Nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 209

IbnKathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 6, p. 199

Naṣīr ad-Dīn al-Albanī, *Silsilāt al-Aḥādīthaṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah* (Kuwait: Ad-Dāraṣ-Ṣalāfiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358

CHARTER OF STATESMANSHIP BY IMAM ALI (‘A)

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PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [*Ahl al-Bayt*] of the Prophet (‘a), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim *ummah* with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imāms of the Prophet’s Household (*‘a*), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are of

unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shī’ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shī’ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet’s Household (‘a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muḥammad (s).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imām al-Mahdī, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Ayatollah Muhammad Fadil Lankarani the author of the present book, and Muhsen Dehqani Taftani, its translator. We also thank

our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation Office. ✍

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

In the Name of the Most Exalted

This book is a commentary on the Commander of the Faithful's (‘a) appointment letter of Malik al-Ashtar as Governor of Egypt. It is being presented for the second time with additions and other advantages. A series of discussions on this subject was held by me in the presence of a group of esteemed scholars of religion at the Qum Theological Seminary's Department of Islamic Promotion. This is a composite report of those discussions. Its composer is Hujjat Al-Islam Shaykh Husayn Karimi-Zanjani, a prolific writer, erudite clergyman, and learned scholar of the Qum Theological Seminary. He has a major share in this book as he has added interesting topics, headings, and changed some of the comments.

While expressing my admiration and gratitude for his valuable services, I implore the Great God to acknowledge them and grant us the favor of greater services.

Qum, Theological Seminary
Muhammad Fadil Lankarani
Dated: June, 16, 1987

FOREWORD

Brief introduction to the author's life history

Ayatullah Hajj Shaykh Fadil Movahhedi Lankarani (Kafqazi), a renowned man of religious knowledge, faith and practice, and an eminent professor at the Qum Theological Seminary, was born in the year 1931. His illustrious father, Ayatullah Fadil Lankarani was not only a revered clergyman, but also a highly distinguished professor of the Qum Theological Seminary. He migrated from the Caucuses region and studied as well as taught in the holy city of Mashhad at the Zanjan Theological Seminary. After coming to Qum, he joined the Qum Theological Seminary one year after it was founded by Ayatullah Hajj Abdul Karim Ha'ery Yazdy (may God bless his soul). He got married into a genteel family and our beloved professor was the fourth child of the family.

Deeply influenced by his father's spirituality, he fell in love with his ways and adopted his lifestyle as a role model to link him to the world of spirituality. As soon as he successfully completed the six-year period of primary education, he suddenly decided to quit studying in modern schools and opted to join the fraternity of seminary students of theology.

He was thirteen years old when his zeal for the path he had chosen kept burning deep inside his heart. Another factor that the hand of providence placed beside him making the zealous adolescent to continue on his chosen

path with greater passion was that his closest primary school friend with whom he shared spiritual and emotional communion- the late Ayatollah Hajj Sayyid Mostafa Khumayni, elder son of the nation's Imam – was there beside him. As two compassionate friends and two fellow travelers and colleagues, they continued the long and arduous plus sweet and pleasant together. In the words of the professor himself: "The presence of this beloved friend played a significant role in the intensity of our enthusiasm for the path we had chosen; and right from the start, we continued with our studies with the help of one another as two co-debaters."

With love as his guide and zeal and fervor his guiding light, he completed the literature and preliminaries courses in just six, instead of eight to nine years. He was only nineteen when he reached the last level of his post graduate studies.

He was the youngest student who attended the classes of the late Supreme Ayatollah Burujerdi which were of an extremely high level, His young countenance was quite conspicuous among the rest of the classmates and quite a number of the persons imagined that he would be incapable of comprehending the topics discussed in those lectures. However, the young and zealous theology student of those days would instantly write down in Arabic, each and every lesson that Ayatollah Burujerdi would teach. It showed that he had not only comprehended the lesson but, gained proficiency in the concepts taught. One day, the late Ayatollah Burujerdi saw his work while visiting his father, and said to him: "I never thought that he would be able to comprehend the

language and intricacies of the lessons so well and write them down in the form of interesting phrases from the point of view of both communicability and comprehensibility – and, that too, in Arabic."

It was at that time that the Imam of the *ummah*, Imam Khumayni, began to teach the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and a large number of ardent enthusiasts gathered to obtain effusion from his knowledge-loaded presence. One of the most enthusiastic of those individuals was none other than Ayatollah Fadil Movahedi-Lankarani. Alongside principles of Islamic jurisprudence, the Imam also began a course in Islamic jurisprudence from the book, 'Ritual Purity'. The professor participated in those sessions and took notes with such diligence, sagacity and alacrity, that the outcome of those notes exceeded several book volumes.

Apart from these, he passed several years of his fruitful life in learning philosophy and theosophy besides teaching Islamic jurisprudence and rational theology. In this field of study, his mentor was the illustrious man of Qur'anic commentary, the outstanding professor, late Allameh Tabatabaie. In his productive presence, he studied Sabzevary's 'Systematic Discussions', and thereafter, Molla Sadri Shirazi's book 'Asfar' (travelogue). He also attended discussions on ideological topics and ethics.

Due to his rare razor sharp intelligence, the professor quickly attained the level of *Ijtihad*, i.e., independent reasoning. At thirty-years of age he no longer had the need to emulate the opinions of a religious authority. He relied on his own deductions to resolve all religious and

sectarian problems through his own independent reasoning.

Another interesting scene from the professor's life was that in the second or third year of his seminary education, at the age of fifteen or sixteen, he would hold classes and teach groups of seminary students. From the start, the lectures of the professor were warm and exciting and a large number of ardent followers of knowledge and faith would attend his classes. Often those individuals were all senior in age to their mentor – a mentor so young, that when he appeared in front of his students, it seemed unbelievable that this young erudite scholar was teaching all those individuals senior in age and imparting the gems of knowledge from deep within his fiery heart. When he was fifteen to sixteen years of age, his students usually numbered more than seventy to eighty persons; when he was nineteen years of age, his teaching sessions had expanded to such an extent that often hundreds of persons would attend his classes. Thus, when he started to teach the book *Kifayatul Usul,* the last toughest textbook of the highest level of that course, almost six to seven hundred students would attend his class and the lectures would be tape-recorded. The recordings are still used for reference purposes by young and fervent seminary students today.

It is now almost thirteen years since the professor started teaching post graduate classes and a large number of erudite scholars, who have undertaken research work, have compilations to their credit and who in turn, teach a large number of students, participate in the professor's lectures on external principles and benefit from his prolific knowledge and erudition.

The Professor's Compilations

The professor began to write Islamic books right from his youth. His first compilation was published with the title *Nihayat Al-Taqrir*, based on Ayatollah Boroujerdi's lessons during his eight years of study. This work of about five-hundred pages was initially supervised by Ayatollah Boroujerdi and printed, thereafter, with his full endorsement. The professor was not more than twenty-six years of age then, and a few years later, the second volume of *Nihayat Al-Taqrir* was published. If the discussions pertaining to obligatory prayer of the traveler and the Friday Congregation prayer are placed in a third volume, the three volumes shall incorporate all of Ayatollah Boroujerdi's discussions and lectures on the topics of the book *Al-Salat* in the course of eight years.

The professor also wrote valuable books on the subjects discussed in Imam Khumayni's class sessions on Islamic jurisprudence and rational theology. Two-thirds of the topics on the science of rational theology – including expressions and rational concepts, were compiled in five noteworthy volumes.

The greatest and most valuable written work of the professor is a book on which he spent quite a number of years, the task of writing which is still continuing. This valuable detailed compilation is accompanied with an interesting incident from our country's fruitful political struggle and martyr-nurturing Islamic nation, in particular, the revolutionary clergy, who were confronted with chains, shackles, imprisonment, torture and exile for years and years. Our professor was also arrested by the bloodthirsty regime and exiled to various parts of the

country. One of the locations of his exile was Yazd, the city of heroes, where the professor spent two and a half years of his precious life and decided to seize the opportunity and write a memorable work. He started writing a commentary on the invaluable work of Imam Khumayni entitled, *Tahrir Al Wasilah*. This memorable work transformed the years of suffering into days filled with spirituality, fruitfulness, and accomplishment, compiling almost five volumes. This extensive and valuable commentary still continues, and it is expected that by Divine grace and favor, the entire work shall exceed forty volumes. Currently, twelve volumes of this book have been completed, out of which two volumes entitled, *Tafsil Ash Shariah fi Sharh Tahrir al-Wasilah*, have been printed so far.

Yet another of the professor's compilation is a book entitled, *Madkhal Al-Tafsir*, a series of the professor's lectures for the benefit of a vast cross-section of seminary students. This book incorporates three topics: miracles of the Qur'an, its various interpretations, and absence of alteration in the Qur'an. In the days of his exile, the professor compiled the notes related to these discussions in the form of a three-hundred page book and published it after he was released from exile.

His other notable compilation is a book written with the collaboration of the late Ayatollah Eshraqy – son-in-law of Imam Khumayni. This book deals with topics related to issues of *Imamat* (religious leadership) according to the glorious Qur'an, and has been published in two volumes - one entitled *The Infallible Imams,* or, *Guardians of Revelation according to the Qur'an*, and the other: *The*

Glowing Faces in the Verse on Tathir (Purification). The topics discussed in this book are well-documented with evidence from reliable Islamic sources. Any person who studies them without prejudice and erroneous preconceived judgments, and becomes familiar with the principle and conditions of *Imamat* (religious leadership) according to the Qur'an, shall also accept the religious leadership of the Immaculate Imams ('a) with his heart and soul. It is fervently hoped that the day comes when all religious, sectarian, ideological and doctrinal issues become free of prejudice; and irrigate the heart, soul and thought of Islamic nations from the fountainhead of truth. Besides these, the professor also has written enlightening and valuable dissertations on diverse issues.

Political struggles of the professor

When Imam Khumayni started his extensive and profound religious-political struggle and revolted against oppression, decadence, faithlessness and imperialism, the professor also joined him on this path and began his political struggles. These struggles were at the individual and communal level, as they belonged to the Association of Teachers of the Theological Seminary, which was engaged in remarkable and fruitful activities. Unity, consensus, solidarity and singularity of expression, the very things that were reckoned to be the important keys to the Islamic Revolution's victory, played a crucial and decisive role in the professor's political struggles.

In connection with these political activities he was time and again arrested by the bloodthirsty regime; time and again summoned for excessive interrogations; and; time and again imprisoned and tortured by the brutal 'Savak'

secret police, and finally, exiled to the worst parts of the country climate –wise. His first place of exile was the port town of Bandar Lengeh, where he was sent at the peak of the scorching summer season. The professor spent four months in that suffocating region which, to quote the professor himself, was equivalent to forty years of toil, tribulation and suffering. Thereafter, the professor was exiled to the desert region of Yazd, where he spent two and half years under virtual house arrest. In these two and half years, he endured such hardships and sufferings that the term 'indescribable' would not do justice to them. However, he made good use of this period of exile and, in addition to his valuable scientific research, compilations and writings, covertly held constructive meetings and established fruitful contacts with the people of Yazdwith the help of Martyr Ayatollah Saduqi. By enlightening the people, they placed them on the path of Imam Khumayni's revolutionary struggle so that when the Revolution reached its climax, the people of Yazd were among the most leading martyrdom-seeking revolutionaries who, with bare fists, challenged the artillery, the tanks and bullets. Consequently, by martyring hundreds of lives, they offered gallant resistance in this path and took great and effective strides towards the Revolution's victory.

Finally, the period of exile ended in the same way that the period of oppression, faithlessness and arrogant dictatorship came to an end. Debauchery, decadence and repression were replaced with purity, peace and freedom. The darkness of faithlessness disappeared and the revitalizing sunlight of Islam shone brilliantly, However, those who shall benefit from the splendor of this sunlight

must never forget what a great role such men, as our esteemed professor, played in removing the dark clouds from the sunlight of truth.

About this text

After the Islamic Revolution, the professor started a course on Imam Ali's (‘a) *Nahj al-Balaghah*, at the Qum Department of Islamic Promotion, for a number of students of Imam Sadiq's (‘a) School of Thought and the clergy of the Theological Seminary. In this course, the professor chose His Holiness Ali's (‘a) commandment to Malik al-Ashtar Nakha'i. The lectures were recorded on cassettes by the Department of Islamic Promotion and, thereafter, made into a booklet for the students of the Theological Seminary. I decided to collect and compile the booklets of the professor's lessons and publish them in book form and make them available to all. The point that I must definitely make is that in transferring the discussions by relying on what I had learnt from the professor himself, I permitted myself to change the tone of the discussion from a conversational form into a textbook and written form. All the same, I sincerely confess that whatever benefits are noted throughout this book is by virtue of the knowledge of the professor; whereas, whatever flaws, deficiencies and shortcomings are present, they are of my making and due to my own inadequacy of knowledge.

PART ONE
MALIKASHTAR AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF EGYPT

Nahj al-Balaghah

The shortest definition of the glorious Qur'an would be: the Word of Almighty God that descended upon the heart of the Prophet of God (s) in the form of revelation. One can define the *Nahj al-Balaghah* as the words of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ('a), that incorporate his sayings, writings, letters, wills, brief statements, advice, admonishment, commandments and decrees. It was compiled in book form, approximately a thousand years ago, in three sections; namely: sermons, letters and sayings.

However, neither the former definition of the Qur'an nor the latter one of the *Nahj al-Balaghah* are as much as a drop in the oceans that need to be spoken, written, heard and read about. In fact, pronouncing such a definition for the Qur'an which is a book of revelation, as well as for the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, which is derived from revelation, and is the most beautiful, rational and perfect continuation of the guidance of the Qur'an, causes nothing but embarrassment for the speaker and disappointment for the listener.

How can the *Nahj al-Balaghah* be spoken about when it has protected the world of mankind since hundreds of years; reshaped its entire history and astounded and stupefied mankind by its excellence; has rendered man helpless, and brought him to his knees by its incomparable majesty? How can one speak about a book which is mentioned alongside the Glorious Qur'an, since centuries, has earned the praise of not only friends but

enemies, who have admitted their failing in relation to its glory? How can one describe the magnificent interpretation of a book about which the greatest thinkers of every era have been reflecting and not getting anywhere since a thousand years; about a book that thousands of erudite researchers have written thousands of volumes and filled millions of pages with the most glorious words of praise and adoration? Mankind has yet to succeed in describing and explaining even a miniscule part of its splendor and glory in the manner that it merits, and bring out the depth and profundity of its lofty concepts!

Thus, in this synopsis, we have to be content with giving an abridged introduction to the *Nahj al-Balaghah*. It is hoped that God willing, the hallowed soul of His Holiness assists us and his zealous followers in becoming more and more familiar with this immortal book and in deriving greater benefits from the enormous expanse of its concepts and meanings.

The *Nahj al-Balaghah* was collected and compiled by Sayyid Radi (ra), an ardent follower of Ali (‘a) and his divine and human-nurturing ideology. In 400 A. H. (circa 1000A. D.), these scattered gems of eloquence in the form of speeches and writings, randomly mentioned in various treatises were collected and compiled systematically alongside one another.

In this highly revered book, the lofty thoughts of Imam Ali (‘a) in the form of sermons, ‘Hadith’(narrated traditions of the Prophet-s-), letters, last will, aphorisms, administrative directives, interpretations of the Qur’an’s verses, and hundreds of pieces of advice building

character and improving life, are mentioned. The compiler has viewed the incomparable eloquence and fluency of *Mowla's* (the Master) words and named it *Nahj al-Balaghah.*

The *Nahj al-Balaghah* has certain exclusive features which we shall get acquainted with in the course of the chapters of this book. Besides these features is the accurate sketch of the private life of His Holiness, the events with which he was confronted during his lifetime as well as the manner of dealing with them which lead to extremely important characteristics that are inferred from between the lines. Thus, from this point of view, the *Nahj al-Balaghah* is a video of the life of the righteous successor to the Prophet of Islam (s). All his zealous devotees can view the angelic portrait of their spiritual guide in it and adopt it as a role model.

Malik al-Ashtar's Document of Instruction

One of the chapters of the *Nahj al-Balaghah* that has taken on an immortal hue is Malik al-Ashtar's Document of Instruction or the historical commandment of Imam Ali (‘a) to his faithful aide and companion, Malik al-Ashtar Nakha'i. Imam Ali (‘a) wrote this commandment for the courageous commander of Islam when he assigned the governorship of Egypt to him. The true martyr was on his way to that distant land with the mission to implement the orders of his master Imam Ali (‘a).

Imam Ali (‘a) addresses Malik al-Ashtar and states the canons of the rule of Islamic Justice, its policy and framework, bearing him in mind. However, the fact is that all humanity, in all places and at all times is the

addressees of this Document of Instruction. In other words, the humanizing canons that are mentioned in this letter are like sunlight that shines all over the world, and sheds light and heat over the entire earth. It is only those whose hearts are blinded that have remained and shall remain unaware of its hallowed light.

The brilliant thoughts and ideas of Imam Ali (‘a) have been stated so accurately and profoundly that it could be said that the obligations of entire humanity have been explained clearly and meticulously, whether as a worshipper or creature of God, a human being in society, a ruler who is responsible for implementing Islamic canons, or, an individual who lives under the protection of the delivering laws of Islam. Whenever the recommendations that His Holiness has made in this letter are implemented properly and comprehensively, not only will it ensure establishment and preservation of social justice and security of living, peace of mind and welfare of society’s individuals, rather, it will create the favorable groundwork in human society so that all its individuals with knowledge, awareness, understanding and conviction, resort to Islamic self-development. In the process, they will trim themselves of debauchery and vice, and become pious and righteous worshippers of God, treading the path of righteousness and salvation.

This Document of Instruction guarantees the welfare, health, salvation and happiness in this world and in the afterlife because, all individuals of human society have been summoned to the world of spirituality, respectability and sincerity in an exhilarating tone. This splendid invitation is established on the basis of social justice,

which combats injustice, infringement and aggression, safeguards and promotes freedom, independence, and equality in the face of law.

Personality of Malik al-Ashtar al-Nakha'i

Discussing Malik's unique traits of character is necessary to know the reason why Imam Ali ('a) wrote such an important and unique Document of Instruction to Malik in his name; and named him in the letter's heading, intending to address entire mankind.

Such an act by Imam Ali ('a) cannot be without reason. The person for whom the Imam wrote such a historical, splendid and magnificent letter must be a great personality. In order to find out the magnitude of the greatness of Malik al-Ashtar's personality, it is better to use the phrase that Imam Ali ('a) uttered about him and expressed his view and opinion concerning him.

We know that Malik al-Ashtar was chosen by Imam Ali ('a) to govern Egypt during the time of his rule. We also know that when Malik was journeying towards Egypt, he was poisoned to death and martyred on the way by Muawiyah's undercover agents and hirelings. When news of the martyrdom of that great companion reached him and notified him of the manner of the agonizing loss of Malik, His Holiness was deeply affected and the signs of sorrow and mourning appeared on his angelic countenance. Then in that same sorrowful state, he uttered a sentence about Malik al-Ashtar that best describes Malik.

The Imam ('a) said:

"لَقَدْ كانَ لِي مِثْلَ ما كُنْتُ لِرَسُولِ اللهِ"

«Verily, Malik was to me as I was to the Prophet of God (s)».

Attention to this profound and meaningful statement of the Imam (‘a) reveals Malik al-Ashtar’s illustrious position and superior personality. One observes how the Imam (‘a), without the slightest exaggeration and hyperbole or downslide and inadequacy, speaks about him and goes on to compare Malik’s role and worth in relation to him to be the same as his blessed presence was in relation to the Holy presence of the Prophet of God (s). Therefore, we conclude that, just as Imam Ali (‘a) was the greatest, most qualified and most perfect of the protégés of the honorable Prophet of Islam’s (s) ideology, Malik al-Ashtar was the greatest, most qualified and most complete of the protégés of His Holiness’s ideology and was the closest person to his hallowed presence. Thus, the Imam’s statement is the worthiest description of Malik al-Ashtar and acknowledges that no one else can be placed in the same league as him. Also, Imam Ali (‘a) has not used such a phrase for any other individual.

Malik’s personality from the Prophet of God’s (s) Viewpoint

Yet another worthy phrase that we have on hand concerning the station of Malik al-Ashtar is the one that the Prophet of God (s) had stated about half a century earlier. At that time nobody knew who the words referred to; however, years later, that prophesy came true, and it

then became clear that the statement was about Malik al-Ashtar Nakha'i.

The gist of the incident – with slight differences in the Islamic dates – was, as we read below:

Abuthar, the great companion of the Prophet of God (s) says: "One day, we were sitting with a number of the Prophet of God's (s) companions and close associates. Addressing the audience, His Holiness stated: 'One day one of you shall die in an arid and desolate desert. His death shall occur at a location that is furlongs away from human habitation. At the moment of his death, nobody shall be near him in order to perform the final rites of ablution, shrouding and burial. However, in that same barren land suddenly a group of pious and devoted worshippers of God will arrive on the scene and on the presumption that he has died alone and a stranger in the desert, they will perform all the Islamic rites of shrouding and burial and bury him with honor and respect.'

On that day, nobody could guess which one of those present was the subject of the Prophet of God's (s) prophesies; but with the passage of time and making of history, the subject became quite clear.

Times passed and the Prophet of God (s) passed away and Imam Ali ('a) was confined to his home. The administration of Islamic territories changed hands until it was the turn of the third individual – Uthman. As we know it, it was on the orders of Uthman that Abuthar was exiled to an arid and desolate location, called Rabathah, in the midst of the barren deserts of Mecca and Medina. Abuthar lived with his small family for a long period of time in that desert. Gradually, the members of his family

died and Abuthar was left alone with his daughter and continued his miserable life in that arid desert until, finally, he too passed away.

As soon as he felt that he was about to die and the soul was to depart from his body, he told his daughter: 'I presume that I am the person whom the Prophet of God (s) gave tidings of his death in isolation in a barren desert, because the rest of his companions who were present on that day in his audience have all died and their deaths have taken place in a city or inhabited area. Thus, I am the only surviving companion fated to live and die in this desert. However, my daughter, do not be worried for the Prophet of God (s)said a group of pious and devoted worshipers of God shall come here. So, as soon as I have passed away, get yourself to the road and wait for them at the roadside. When they arrive, narrate to them the incident and rest assured that they will duly come to me on their own.'

Abuthar's daughter says: 'When the sign of my father's impending death became apparent, I walked till I reached the road. At first there wasn't the slightest indication of a human being in that remote road. However, a few moments later, a caravan suddenly appeared from afar and came close. When they got to me I noticed that Malik Ashtar was moving at the head of the caravan. On seeing me, they halted and I told them what had happened and told them that my father Abuthar, the great companion of the Prophet of God (s) was about to die in that barren wilderness. After I had finished speaking Malik al-Ashtar and his fellow travelers immediately came along with me and with honor and respect, as well as, observance of all

religious criteria and Islamic decrees, buried my deceased father.

The Prophet of God (s) had foreseen Malik al-Ashtar as a pious and devoted worshipper of God. How fortunate is Malik! How fortunate is his station that His Holiness (s) should describe and assert him in such terms!

In the words of the enemy

It is appropriate to talk about Muawaiyah's portrayal of Malik al-Ashtar because, according to the saying 'What an enemy says about his rival at the height of animosity is the best testimony of the true personality of that person and the most genuine description of that person.'

When news of Malik's martyrdom reached Muawaiyah, he immediately climbed on to the pulpit in order to announce the good news to a people like himself!

In the course of a long sermon, Muawaiyah mentioned Malik al-Ashtar's martyrdom in the manner discussed below:

"O people! Know it that Ali Bin Abu Talib ('a) had two hands – and today both his hands have been cut off and he has been left without a hand. One of his hands was Ammar Yasser who was killed (martyred) in the Battle of Siffin; and his other hand was Malik al-Ashtar, and I have been informed of the news of his death (martyrdom) today. So rejoice because Ali ('a) is without hands."

Muawiyah unintentionally described Malik al-Ashtar, revealing his standing and personality. Even the nasty enemies knew and admitted that Malik al-Ashtar was one

of the closest and most competent companions of His Holiness.

Situation, Culture and Civilization of Egypt

As history bears witness, the land of Egypt enjoyed a unique position not only among the Islamic territories; but, among all countries of the world, in terms of civilization, knowledge and culture. Egypt's civilization was more than a thousand years old, four-hundred years before the birth of Christ. The well-known Pharaohs of Egypt reigned over the land, and archaeological sites, such as the Great Pyramids of Egypt, reveal its ancient history. In many parts of Egypt, a large number of scientific institutions, research centers and libraries were established and were in the process of development. The fundamental reason for this development – particularly in that specific interval in history – was the administration and control of a group of Greeks over the land of Egypt. These rulers of Greek origin were educated in the cradle of science and learning, and worked hard to promote culture, civilization, philosophy, theosophy and the rational sciences.

The city of Alexandria

One of the most important cities of Egypt which enjoyed a special position in science and academics was Alexandria. Alexandria was founded almost four centuries before the birth of Christ by the Macedonian emperor Alexander. It was the center and capital of Egypt for approximately ten centuries. After Alexander, his successors, called *Molouk Batalasah*, established a number of scientific and research museums, libraries and

centers of education and learning. They laid the foundations of a science academy which gained global reputation as a scientific school and was the focus of attention and meeting place of erudite scholars and students from the four corners of the world. Historical documents show that almost all theosophists, philosophers, scientists and researchers of the rational sciences and philosophical doctrines converged from all over the world and established scientific institutions and libraries in that city.

Alexandria's erudite scholars and scientists rivaled Greece's scientific and cultural elites and in some cases even attained higher scientific levels. Their names were ranked among the world's renowned scientists, and for successive centuries, they mesmerized the eyes of the world. It is not altogether inappropriate to quote the words of George Sarton, the well-known researcher and historian who, although a Christian, has admitted Islam's prolific contribution to science, culture and civilization of the world, and of the west in particular. In fact, he has worked even harder than many Muslims on this subject and presented documents and sources to this effect. He writes:

"Two things have been forgotten and created a difference of opinion in understanding ancient knowledge. The first is the misconception that exists about oriental science. It is extremely naive for a person to think that knowledge began in Greece, because thousands of years of the hard work and effort of Egypt, Mesopotamia, preceded the miracle of Greek science; Greek science had a revivalist aspect to it rather than inventive. The second is the fallacy

that existed about oriental science as well as Greek science. Concealing the oriental roots of the progress of science in Greece is sufficiently ugly and disagreeable; and they have exacerbated this mistake by hiding the fact that fallacies effectively forestalled their progress, and could possibly have destroyed it all at once."[1]

And on the ancient civilization of Egypt, we read:

"Of course we cannot discuss the situation and state of affairs that existed in Egypt prior to history. It is enough to point out that the primeval culture of Egypt pertained to the latter part of the Stone Age, and ancient Egyptians were advanced in many of the agricultural techniques. They were conversant with the cultivation of barley, a type of wheat, sesame seed, and cotton, and had a yearly calendar as well. When the curtain of history went up and the first dynasty of Pharaohs came to power, Egyptian culture - of which there are testimonies on hand - was so advanced that it could not be called the beginning of knowledge and civilization; rather, at that time, Egypt's culture was at the take-off position and it would not have been possible for it to have reached this level without the passing of several thousand years (of hard work and effort on the path of evolution of culture and civilization)."[2]

Progress and decadence

Progress repeatedly became the victim of changes and forged ahead to the brink of total annihilation. According to historians, for a relatively long period, (period of

1. George Sarton, **History of Science**; Introduction, p. 11
2. George Sarton, **History of Science**; Introduction, p. 21

Alexander and his successors) Egypt was under the political influence of Greece and naturally, the culture and civilization of these two lands merged together. However, after the *Batalasah Kings*, Greek civilization went on the decline and collapsed; and when Rome and Greece went to war with one another and the Romans triumphed over Greece, all the occupied territories of the Greeks, including Egypt and Alexandria, came under the all-round political influence and control of Rome. Right from that time, Egyptian culture and civilization and Alexandria's academy of sciences was faced with problems and went through a series of ascents, descents, and renaissance, until finally, around the end of the fourth century A. D. , the Roman empire was divided into two, Eastern Rome (with present-day Istanbul as its capital) and Western Rome (with present-day Rome as its capital), and Eastern Rome accepted Christianity.

Christianity had a negative and destructive influence on both Roman and Greek civilizations and consequently, on the civilizations of Egypt and Alexandria as well. The dark ages of decline and decadence in the West, famously known as the Middle Ages, began from this time. By obeying the orders of the churches that had altered Christian culture, Eastern Rome, which had a tyrannical and repressive regime, turned hostile towards human science and culture. This was because the church-dictated Christianity considered the teaching and learning of science and philosophy to be in conflict with the teachings of Christianity and called those that took steps in this direction deviant, infidels and enemies of God and the Church.

Of course, the situation was not always the same throughout the reign of the Romans. Alexandria witnessed progress several times, and got opportunities to revive its scientific and cultural life; but every time, religious differences, and disputes arising from them, would deal a blow to Egyptian culture and science and halt its progress and evolution.

Nevertheless, the land of Egypt enjoyed a long and splendid record in the field of science, culture and civilization. It enjoyed a unique and remarkable position among the other lands of that epoch and especially among the large number of Islamic territories. It is natural that while writing that historical Document of Instruction, His Holiness Ali (‘a) had taken note of all these considerations and knew that he was dispatching his loyal companion to a people who enjoyed a unique position and superior features. He was also aware of the necessary considerations for governing the people of this land; the credentials that the ruler needed to possess, just as he knew what an honorable person of outstanding attributes and qualifications he was dispatching to such a people. Just as he had given instructions to Malik concerning the people of Egypt, he had introduced Malik to the people of Egypt and acquainted them with his personality. When he sent Malik there before news of the assassination of the previous governor, Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr, had reached him, he wrote to the people of Egypt:

"إنَي بَعَثْتُ إلَيْكُمْ سَيْفاً مِنْ سُيُوفِ الله لا نَابِي الضَّرَبة وَلا كَلِيلَ الحَدِّ فَإنْ اسْتَنْفَرَكُمْ فَأنْفِروا وَإنْ أمَرَكُمْ بَالمَقَامِ فَأقِيمُوا فَإنَّهُ لا يُقْدِمُ وَلا يَحْجِمُ إلا بَأمْريَ وَقَدْ آثَرْتُكُمْ بِهِ عَلَى نَفْسي".

«In truth, I am sending you a sword from among the swords of God; a sword whose blow neither misses its mark, nor its razor-sharpness is blunted. Thus if he orders you to march, then do so; and if he orders you to stay back, then stay back; because he does not advance or retreat except on my orders – and I have preferred him for you over myself.»[1]

Political situation of Egypt

For years, this land was the richest province under the control of the Eastern Roman empire (Byzantine). In the Nile delta area, due to favorable climactic conditions, they would harvest three crops a year and in this respect, Egypt was in fact regarded as the granary of the Byzantine Empire.[2] Even so, the Byzantine government had a hostile attitude towards the people of Egypt and consequently, the situation there was chaotic on the eve of the Muslim conquest. The Egyptians harbored a feeling of hatred and vengeance towards the Byzantines because they persecuted them a lot, especially, over religious disputes. The Coptic Christians who were followers of Prophet Jacob ('a) resented the officials of the Byzantine government, who were followers of the Orthodox

1. **Ya'qubi's History**, vol. 2, chapter on "Caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful Ali ('a)".
2. Dr. Zarrinkoub; **Dawn of Islam**, p. 116.

Christian sect. The Orthodox Christian clergy as well as the bureaucrats would fan the flames of this anger and resentment with their repressive tactics, discrimination and violence. A few years before the arrival of Muslims, Iran's emperor, Khosrow Parvaiz, also launched an attack on Egypt and converted it into a field of battle and aggression and seized some important parts of the Nile territory. However, in subsequent battles the Roman administration took Egypt back from him.[1] In this re-conquest, the attitude of both parties – the Romans and the Egyptians – became more hostile, and the domestic situation became more chaotic.

It was in such a period that Amru Bin As volunteered to launch an attack on Egypt. He was a political-game player and a cunning person from the Umayyad clan. Later, he became an arch enemy of His Holiness, Ali ('a) and, in his hostility he went so far as to betray Muslims with deceit. He destroyed the administrative system of Islam by launching wars against His Holiness, Ali ('a), as well as assassinating (martyring) the most trusted companions of His Holiness. Finally, at the instance of Muawiyah, he went to war against Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr - Ali's ('a) representative in Egypt–and slew him, and also successfully planned the martyrdom of Malik al-Ashtar.

Yes indeed, Amru As had visited Egypt and Syria on several occasions in his youth and had gone to those lands with trade caravans. He was quite aware of its domestic state of affairs, its natural resources and opportunities. Thus, when the second caliph took over the reins of

1. Ibid document.

administration of Islamic territories, Amru As repeatedly asked him to issue an order to conquer Egypt – but the caliph opposed it.

At that time the governor of Egypt was a person by the name of *Qayrous* or Cyrus, who had arrived in Egypt from the Caucuses and consequently, he was popularly known as *Qafqazi* (the Caucasian) and the Muslims would call him *Maquqas*.[1] He had come to Egypt on the orders of Heracles, the Byzantine emperor, and was considered as the second in line to Heracles in running the affairs of Egypt[2]. He was the same individual for whom the Prophet of God (s) had written a letter calling upon him to accept Islam, and he had behaved in a cordial manner with his emissary. While offering his respects to His holiness, he had sent some presents for His Holiness which included a slave girl by the name of *Maria Qibti* (Coptic Maria), from whom the Prophet of God (s) fathered a son by the name of Ibrahim, who died in infancy.[3]

When the second caliph received reports of the profligacy and extravagant lifestyle of Muawiyah and his oppression of the people of Syria, he traveled to Syria to get a first-hand account of the issue. Amru As who was waiting for such an opportunity, caught up with the caliph midway and met him confidentially in *Baitul Maqdis* (Jerusalem). He again suggested an attack on Egypt and its conquest and tried to convince the caliph. In the words of Yacoubi, he told the caliph:

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1. **Dawn of Islam**, p. 116.
2. **Arab History**, vol. 1, p. 208.
3. **Dawn of Islam**, pp. 17 and 75.

"Give me leave to go to Egypt. If we conquer it, it shall be a force for the Muslims to be reckoned with; and Egypt is richer than all the territories and more despicable than all in battle."

Amru As continually exaggerated Egypt's value in the eyes of the caliph and made its conquest appear easy to him.[1] Amru As insisted that the conquest of Egypt would enhance Islam's honor and glory. However, he had mostly his own progress in mind, as he was envious of Khalid Bin Walid and aspired to attain his position by becoming the commander of an army and show his leadership capability in battles. *Arab History* asserts:

"Amr Bin As was looking for a practical field to forge ahead of his great rival Khalid, and when the second caliph arrived in *Baitul Maqdis* (Jerusalem), he seized the opportunity to achieve his deep-seated aspiration and become the commander of the war with Egypt."[2]

The caliph would oppose this proposal and claim that a large number of well-armed Roman soldiers were stationed there who would rise up in defense and that he could not be optimistic about the Muslims gaining the upper hand over them. However, Amru As finally mobilized a four-thousand strong army under his own command and without informing the caliph, embarked on the mission to conquer Egypt. On the other hand, the caliph came to know of this move and was extremely perturbed. He, immediately, wrote a letter to Amru As and sent it to him through Uqbah Bin Amir Jahani. In the

1. **Ya'qubi's History**: Farsi translation, vol. 2, p. 32.
2. **Arab History**, vol. 1, p. 206.

letter, the caliph labeled Amru Aas as 'a sinner, son of a sinner', and castigated him, writing:

"Why have you attacked Egypt which has a well-equipped Roman army with such a small force? If this letter reaches you while you have not entered the soil of Egypt as yet, then turn back immediately; However, if you have entered the soil of Egypt, then there is no alternative except to place your trust in God and move ahead."

Uqbah Bin Amir Jahani caught up with Amru As and his soldiers when they had entered the city of 'Rafah', the last settlement of Palestine and a city on the way to Egypt. They needed two more days to reach Asqalan, and were still far away from Egyptian soil. As soon as he saw Uqbah, he cleverly understood that he had come on behalf of the caliph and was carrying a letter about not attacking Egypt. For this reason he paid no attention to him and continued with his military expedition. After a long march, they reached the shores of the Ram sea and in the proximity of Arish – a city that was on the Syrian border and part of Egyptian territory. There he asked to see Uqbah, took the letter from him and opened it. When he read its contents and came to know of the caliph's message, he gathered a number of his commanders and soldiers and asked: "Where we are right now is part of which land?" All answered unanimously that they were indeed in Egypt. Then Amru As said: "So, we must continue with our expedition because the caliph has written in this letter that if his letter reaches us before we have entered Egypt, we must turn back, whereas, now we are in the land of Egypt and there is no going back at all."

Consequently, they continued with their march and on entering Egyptian soil they were engaged in a battle with an army which was under the command of the governor of Egypt. Their battle lasted for about a month but Amru As did not emerge victorious because as the caliph had foreseen, they were confronted with a strong and well-equipped army. Finally, Amru As wrote a letter to the caliph and asked for his assistance. The caliph sent four commanders by the names of Zubayr Bin Awwam, Miqdad Bin Aswad, and Ibadah Bin Samet Musaylamah Bin Mukhallad, along with twelve-thousand fighters to assist Amru As. Fourteen of these soldiers were from the *Muhajirs* and companions of the Prophet of God (s) under the command of Zubayr Bin Awwam, while there were sixteen soldiers from the *Ansar* under the command of Ibadat Bin Samet, who were a source of tremendous assurance and boost in the morale of the fighters.

The battle lasted for about three months until finally the warriors of Islam emerged victorious and overran the city's fort and fortifications and occupied that part of Egypt. Maquqis the governor of Egypt, adopted the policy of negotiations and compromise with the Muslims and agreed to pay ransom of two Dinars for every man. [1] Next, the army of Islam marched towards Alexandria.

The city of Alexandria had three more forts as well as a garrison comprising of fifty-thousand fighters, whereas, the Muslims numbered hardly more than twenty-thousand, and did not have sufficient weapons and equipment to lay siege on such a city. Even so,

1. **Ya'qubi's History**, p. 33; **Dawn of Islam**, p. 117.

Alexandria was conquered easily and without a fight. This was because they were so preoccupied with domestic disputes and dissents that it was far easier and attractive for its inhabitants to surrender and pay ransom than to offer resistance and fight the Muslims. This city, which was conquered so effortlessly, was a bustling, civilized and almost unrivalled territory about which Amru As himself wrote in a report that:

"I have conquered a city which I cannot describe except by saying that a city with four thousand summer palaces, four thousand baths, four thousand ransom-paying Jewish residents, and four thousand gardens of kings has fallen into my hands…"[1]

In this manner, Egypt, a rich flourishing land of the Nile Delta region fell into the hands of Muslims. After the conquest of Egypt, Amru As was the governor of that territory for almost four and half years.

Two important incidents after the arrival of Islam in Egypt

In order to understand Egypt's sensitive political situation which had attracted the attention of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ('a), it is necessary to mention two incidents which speak of the extraordinary strategic importance of this land.

One was that the people of Egypt were quick to realize that the new governor, Amru As, and his men and administrators that had entered the land triumphantly, maltreated the people; and despite the protection and

1. **Arab History**, p. 12.

provisions they had been given, they were being troubled and humiliated. This attitude caused widespread public resentment to grow speedily. Meanwhile, in this period, meaning three years after the conquest of Alexandria, the Byzantine emperor once again dispatched his naval forces to the area in the hope that perhaps they would recapture the region by launching another war. Precisely, in these circumstances, the same discontented people turned their backs on the Muslims and gave a red carpet welcome to the Byzantine army and surrendered the city to them. Of course, it is true that this time the Byzantine power did not endure for very long and within a short period, once again, Amru As, returned and with his army drove away the Romans. However, this subject revealed that the issue was quite sensitive; and that Egypt was in fact, the hub of explosions and, like a powder keg, ready to ignite. This was because it was extremely hard for the Egyptians who, for centuries, had been subjected to a lot of oppression by the Romans in particular, and had pinned their hopes on the new future, to welcome persecution by the government administrators of this new religion as well.

The second incident is about the revolt of a group of Egyptians who, during the rule of caliph Uthman, departed from their homeland and arrived in Medina in order to express their anger and resentment at the behavior of his administrators. This group of Egyptians besieged Uthman's residence for a period of time and finally killed him. This issue is yet another testimony to the extraordinary sensitivity of the situation in Egypt.

The importance of Egypt increased with each passing day

After the re-conquest of Alexandria, gradually, all the vast and bountiful land of Egypt fell into the hands of Muslims. However, an important point to note is that almost all the regions of Egypt surrendered easily to the Muslims without as much as offering any worthwhile resistance. It is said that the religious disputes between the Coptic Christians of Egypt and the Orthodox Byzantines that had caused wars, killings and persecutions for years played a prominent role in these docile surrenders, as well as, in the swift advance of Muslims.

After the total conquest of Egypt, the Muslims made significant advances across its frontiers to other regions within a short period. They extended their conquests westward and went as far as Libya and Andalusia.

The significance of Egypt became more evident to the Muslims because, from then on, almost all the protectorates of Rome and territories under Byzantine rule, located to the west of Egypt, remained defenseless, and for the Muslims, their conquest became both easy as well as inevitable.

Muslims followed the route to *Bentapolis* and annexed *Barqah.* Thereafter, they took control of the Berber tribes in Tripoli including the *Lawatah* clan. Similarly, a little later, Abdullah Bin Abu Sarh, who succeeded Amru As and became the governor of Egypt, advanced so far ahead in the Tripoli (*Tarablus*) region that a large part of Africa

came under Muslim rule and its administrative capital, Carthage, agreed to pay *Jizyah* to the Muslims. [1]

Egypt was a valuable part of the Islamic empire, and it became imperative to pay due attention to the circumstances of that land as well as its people. Nevertheless, during the time of the third caliph, when all tasks in Egypt were organized in a slipshod fashion, the anger of its people increased. Uthman designated a person like Abdullah Bin Abu Sarh as governor of Egypt – an individual who, when dealing with people considered any unlawful act to be lawful, a person who had aroused the Prophet of God's (s) anger and was among those ten individuals whose blood, His Holiness had legitimized spilling on the day of Mecca's conquest. [2] Even so, Uthman sent him to a strategically sensitive location such as Egypt, and gave him a free hand to deal with the people as he wished. Finally, Muhammad Bin Huthaifah, who was one of Uthman's opponents and the main instigator of the Egyptians' assassination of Uthman, expelled Abdullah Bin Abu Sarh from Egypt with the intention of replacing him as governor of Egypt. After Abdullah's expulsion, he went to the mosque, led the congregation prayer as the prayer leader of the people and introduced himself as governor of Egypt.

Ali ('a) reforms Egypt's state of affairs

When, after twenty-five years of silence, seclusion, and tolerating the 'thorn in the eye and the bone in the throat',

1. **Arab History**, p. 215.
2. **Yavoubi's History**, vol. 2, Section on Uthman's reign as caliph.

to safeguard the essence of Islam, Imam Ali (‘a) sat on the seat of the Prophet of God’s (s) caliphate, which was his long-standing right, and everything was changed and transformed. In particular, His Holiness paid special attention to the state of affairs of Egypt because of its strategic importance, and took steps to sort out the situation as soon as his government was established.

His Holiness selected Qais Bin Sa’d Bin Ibadah, one of his trusted lieutenants, as governor of Egypt. Qais arrived quickly in Egypt and took charge of the governorship and administration of that land. However, Muawiyah had since long set his greedy eyes on Egypt and aspired to bring it under his own control. On the other hand, he had a long-standing enmity with Imam Ali (‘a), and saw that the time was ripe for sowing discord. He immediately wrote a letter to Qais and proposed that he leave Ali (‘a) and swear allegiance to him instead. Muawiyah used all kinds of roguish ruses and tempted Qais with deceptive offers while, on the other hand, he accused Imam Ali (‘a) of involvement in the assassination of Uthman and called him a murderer - but none of these deceptions succeeded in corrupting Qais. However, Qais was a newcomer to Egypt and not totally in command of the situation at that instant; he was yet to learn how to handle such deceptions so that it did not deal a blow to the pillars of His Holiness’s administration. Consequently, he did not give a categorical reply to Muawiyah and rather, vacillated and gave an ambiguous response in order not to give an alibi to Muawiyah.

Muawaiyah wrote another letter and this time, instead of tempting him, he threatened him to agree to swear

allegiance to him or else…. Qais could not tolerate it and wrote a strongly worded letter categorically expressing his opposition to Muawiyah and his loyalty to Imam Ali (‘a). Qais wrote: “You and your inner circle are all in the wrong and the right only belongs to Imam Ali (‘a) and his companions.”

When this letter reached Muawaiyah he despaired of Qais’s support, but did not desist from deception. He forged a letter filled with lies on behalf of Qais, attached the previous ambiguous reply to it and then proclaimed in Syria that: “Ali’s (‘a) emissary to Egypt has changed sides and has sworn allegiance to me.”

When the news reached Imam Ali (‘a) and the companions of His Holiness, they were dismayed, and arguments broke out among the circle of close companions. The companions of His Holiness – Abdullah Bin Jafar in particular – insisted that the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) eliminate this sedition by dismissing Qais from the post of governor of Egypt immediately. However, The Imam was opposed to this proposal and stated: “Deception and trickery is involved in this matter. I know Qais quite well and can see that these are not his words and behavior; rather, he has been slandered.”

All the same, the atmosphere created at that time around Imam Ali (‘a) caused the Imam (‘a) to remove Qais from the governorship of Egypt - despite the confidence he had in his integrity and loyalty - and to replace him with Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr.[1]

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1. Here, some people might ask the question why Imam Ali (‘a), despite having knowledge of Qais’s innocence and being

After arriving in Egypt and taking over the job of governor of that land, Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr wrote a letter to the Imam (‘a) and requested: “In order to have a prescription for execution of my duties and to act precisely in accordance with the commandments of Islam and without offence, wrongdoing and error, oblige and send me the exhaustive set of lawful and forbidden traditions.’ In reply to his letter, the Imam (‘a) responded with a detailed, meaningful and profound letter and placed at his disposal the necessary commandments and instructions from the enormous expanse of his knowledge.

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aware of the slander and sedition that was committed against him, dismiss him from an office simply because of the governing atmosphere around him.

We reply in the affirmative. Precise and correct policy for safeguarding the essence of Islam and preventing disputes that can create disturbances and even deviations sometimes causes a leader to give his consent to a pragmatic action against his own wishes the principal cause of which is simply the peculiar atmosphere surrounding him. We give another example of this issue from our own era and about which we do have some information. This was concerning the (former president of Iran) Bani Sadr, who despite his anti-revolutionary actions and behavior remained in an office that he did not merit. After his dismissal, Imam Khumayni stated: “Since about a year I knew that this person (Bani Sadr) was involved in anti-revolutionary currents.” However, the atmosphere governing the society and environment was not conducive for discussing the issue and exposing Bani Sadr. Consequently, for approximately one year, the Imam of the Muslim Ummah (Khumayni) tolerated the presence of such an individual in the highest executive office. By comparing it with this incident, one can feel in what sort of an atmosphere His Holiness, Ali (‘a), was placed.

In terms of significance, this letter is comparable to the Document of Instruction written to Malik al-Ashtar. It has also been chronicled in the *Nahj al-Balaghah* and we draw the attention of the seekers of Divine truths and knowledge of Imam Ali (‘a) to it.

Martyrdom of Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr and its ramifications

However, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr’s tenure as governor did not last very long. Mu’awiyah sent Amru As, his politicking and conspiring adviser, to Egypt in order to sow discord and create anarchy; and, in the course of this event, Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr was martyred by Amru As. After Muhammad’s martyrdom, all his books, letters, documents and certificates including the prolific letter full of constructive and insightful directives fell into the hands of Amru As. When he read the letter and noted its contents, he took it to Muawiyah.

When the letter reached Muawiyah and he too read its contents, he was astounded by the amount of knowledge and wisdom that it contained and which reminded one of the tales of the sea and the water jug. When he showed the letter to his inner circle of friends and companions, one of them, Walid Bin ‘Uqbah (the same person who during the rule of Uthman had climbed on to the pulpit in a totally drunken state, had vomited and recited the dawn prayer in four units instead of the prescribed two units, and said mockingly that he could prolong it even further if the worshippers wanted), on reading the insightful letter suggested to Muawiyah to make a bonfire out of it, but Muawiyah refused, saying: “You certainly are not an

expert; isn't it a pity to burn such a letter! We must preserve it and learn something from its directives and do our job; because, if we burn it, then we will never find a person who knows even a single word of the sea of knowledge and wisdom that it contains, and who is in a position to teach it to us."

Walid said: "Is it right for the people to come to know that you have made the writings of Ali ('a) your paragon and are using them to do your job?"

Muawiyah replied: "So, are you suggesting that I should burn the clear, peerless and brilliant knowledge written in this letter? I swear by God that till today, I had neither seen nor heard more comprehensive and solid knowledge than this."

Walid then said: "If you are overcome with such astonishment only by a letter of Ali ('a), which reveals a tiny part of his existence, why don't you swear allegiance to the master of all this knowledge instead of being hostile towards him?"

Muawiyah had no answer to give, so he made excuses; and harped on Imam Ali's ('a) involvement in the murder of Uthman, and said: "Our fight is aimed at avenging Uthman's blood." Then, he added: "Of course I shall not tell the people that this letter is Ali's('a); rather, I shall say that Abu Bakr – Muhammad's father – had written this for his son and had given him such a wise set of instructions!!"

For a period of time after his appointment as governor of Egypt, Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr warned the inhabitants that had, till then, not sworn allegiance to Ali ('a), that

they must either do so or else leave Egypt. They did not agree to swear allegiance to Ali (‘a) and, as a result, a battle ensued between them and Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr. On the other hand, Muawiyah entered the fray. Since the battle of Siffin culminated in the question of arbitration and the arbitration ended in favor of Muawiyah, he considered occupying Egypt more seriously. His cohorts also showed their consent to this idea and thus, an army commanded by Amru As departed for Egypt. Amru As entered Egypt in the heat of Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr’s battle with the insurgent group of the Egyptian population, and launched an attack on Muhammad and his soldiers. The assault culminated in the martyrdom of Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr.

It was precisely in such a chaotic situation that Imam Ali (‘a) appointed his loyal companion Malik al-Ashtar as governor of Egypt and sent him to that land. It was the sum of these factors that was responsible for the unique importance of Egypt - an Egypt that was a vast and densely populated territory; an Egypt that was inhabited by diverse clans and tribes with diverse cultures and mindsets; an Egypt that was far away from the administrative center and caliphate and was not easy to manage its affairs diligently; an Egypt that, three years after its surrender to the Muslims, had raised its head in revolt and turned its back on Islam and opened the gates of its cities to Byzantine rule – the arch enemy of Islam; an Egypt whose people were dissatisfied with the administrators of previous governments and a group of them had raised their heads in revolt against the third caliph and assassinated him; an Egypt in which a group of its people opposed and disobeyed Imam Ali’s (‘a)

emissary and representative, and were determined to resolve their dispute through a conflict that ultimately led to his martyrdom…

Yes, such a land was extraordinarily strategic, and a person who assumed office there as governor needed to be firstly, a man like Malik al-Ashtar; and secondly, needed to have an enormous and invaluable set of instructions such as the Document of Instruction in his possession – and this was a task that Imam Ali (‘a) performed.

PART TWO
STATESMANSHIP
OF IMAM ALI (‘A)

Approach to the Nahj al-Balaghah

In Shiite culture, the Qur'an, the Nahj al-Balaghah, and other written works of the Immaculate Imams ('a), are the only ideological models for human beings, and the only way to judge right from wrong.

For confirmation of the veracity of quoted *ahadith* (narrated traditions) of the Prophet of Islam (s), the Immaculate Imams ('a) stated: "Measure its veracity through the Qur'an; if it conforms to the Qur'an, it is correct, otherwise it is false and forged." This deduction from the Qur'an can be accomplished in two ways: first, if a person approaches these sacred words with an open mind and without prejudgment; second, if he approaches the Qur'an with a prejudgment and a preconceived notion. In the latter case, our understanding of the Qur'an shall not be the perception of the Qur'an, but an imposition of our belief on the Qur'an, and, a misuse of the Qur'an.

This sort of referring to the Qur'an is not only useless and does not teach a person any of its supreme concepts; instead, it can easily deviate a person from the truth. After all, don't we believe that the Qur'an is word of revelation? We that must place ourselves on the path of the Word of Revelation instead of placing them in the direction of our own thinking, and then search these words to justify and endorse our judgments and our self-invented thoughts and ideas.

We observed a specimen of such a deviant perception of the Glorious Qur'an in the course of the Islamic Revolution. Small anti-Revolution groups, in fact, anti-

Islamic, were using this method. They quoted a verse from the Qur'an on every occasion. However, it is important to reflect on the meaning, interpretation and deduction which they are applying to it. These small groups do not care what the Qur'an actually says; they open the Qur'an to find a verse on which they can impose their preconceived notion. Consequently, they draw strange conclusion from the Qur'an and invent justifications from the Word of God that, besides being regrettable, are also quite funny. Instead of making good use of the Qur'an, they slander God Almighty and make themselves the connotation of God's statement in the Qur'an that: "It increases not but the losses of the unjust." The only thing they achieve from such inferences is an increase in their losses and sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of their deviant thoughts.

One of the numerous types of such deviant deductions is mentioned below:

In the Glorious Qur'an, in *Surah Al-Baqarah,* God describes the *Muttaqin* as "Those who believe in the unseen", meaning that those who fear God, believe in the unseen. For all intents and purposes the word 'unseen' here refers to God. However, these small deviant groups say that 'unseen' (Ghaib) means underground, concealed and covert struggle and therefore, the Qur'an calls upon you to engage in covert and underground struggle!! More interesting is the fact that, based on 'the call' which they have concocted from the Qur'an themselves, they engage in an underground struggle against Islam and the Qur'an itself! What is the reason and source of these dangerous deviations?

This approach to the Qur’an results only in deviation. The same holds true for the statements of the Immaculate Imams (‘a) and, in particular, the Nahj al-Balaghah. It means that when we study the Nahj al-Balaghah, we must not believe in something beforehand and then search the Nahj al-Balaghah to see in which part the Imam (‘a)had spoken on the subject, so that we can impose our opinion and belief on it. Our minds intention must be purely to conduct actual research and see what Imam Ali (‘a) has stated and not what we want. If we study the Nahj al-Balaghah with an open mind we shall benefit from it, otherwise, we should not anticipate anything other than deviation, depravity and destruction.

"هَذا مَا أمَرَ بِهِ عَبْدُالله عَلِيٌّ أمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنينَ مالِكَ ابْنَ الْحارِثِ الأشْتَرَ فِي عَهْدِهِ إلَيْهِ حِينَ وَلاهُ مِصْرَ "

«This is what Almighty Allah’s slave Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, has ordered Malik Bin Haarith al-Ashtar in his letter (of appointment) when he appointed him Governor of Egypt.»

The statements of the Immaculate Imams (‘a) have a specific clear meaning without verbosities and meaningless sentences. Imam Ali (‘a) intended to reveal two fundamental themes of Islamic culture through the phrase:

" مَا أمَرَ بِهِ عَبْدُالله "

First: elimination of negligence

The biggest malady of the powerful is negligence of themselves and the manner of their existence. Most of

them are depraved, oppressive, unjust, and exploit, persecute and kill without reason. If a ruler is aware that all his power, physical and psychic, has been bestowed on him, and whenever the Bestower wills, he can take back his power and capabilities, then he will not be unjust, cruel, initiate war, rebel and disobey. On the contrary, if he does not realize the glory of the Creator and his own insignificance, then his rebellion and arrogance shall increase with each passing moment. Perhaps Imam Ali (‘a), seated on the superficial throne of power, is prompting his own self: ‘Beware! All that you possess belongs to Him and will return to Him.’ It is for this reason that before standing up in prayer after prostrating, the sacred Legislator recommends uttering "بِحَوْلِ اللهِ أَقُومُ وَاقْعُدْ" implying that a person must be aware that the act of sitting and standing up in the mandatory prayer is by the Grace and Favor of the Supreme One, and that the person neither had nor has any power and independence of his own making.

Will the powerful tyrants of the world continue to perpetrate injustice and tyranny if they consider all their power and capabilities to be from God?!

Second: mastery in the aegis of worshipping God

Imam Ali (‘a) believed in the true culture of Islam which proclaims that power and authority, mastery and supremacy, lies in the servitude of Allah. He has mentioned ‘Allah’s servant’ immediately after ‘orders’ to show that mastery does not occur without servitude to God. We read in the Glorious Qur’an:

﴿سُبۡحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَسۡرَىٰ بِعَبۡدِهِۦ لَيۡلٗا مِّنَ ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلۡحَرَامِ إِلَى ٱلۡمَسۡجِدِ ٱلۡأَقۡصَا﴾

*"Glory be to Him, Who carried His **servant** by night from the Inviolable Mosque (Masjid al-Haram) to the Further Mosque (Al Aqsa)."*[1]

God does not say, 'He took His Prophet'; He states:

﴿سُبۡحَٰنَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أَسۡرَىٰ بِعَبۡدِهِۦ﴾

It is sincere servitude that makes a human being ascend towards heaven(*Mi'raj)*. In connection with this concept, the Prophet of God (s) states that:

"الْصَّلاةُ مِعْراجُ كُلّ مُؤْمن نَقي"

«Every pious believer's daily mandatory prayers are his (means of) ascension towards heaven (Mi'raj).»

This shows the relationship of *Salat* (mandatory prayers), an expression of man's servitude and devotion to God, with *Mi'raj*, or ascension into the Presence of Supreme Truth.

In the statement that testifies the unity of God (the *Tashah'hud*) of the daily mandatory prayers, we recite:

"أشْهَدُ أنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدَهُ وَرَسُوله"

1. *Surah al-Isra: 1.*

"«We testify that Muhammad is the servant of God and His prophet.»

Precedence of servitude to prophet hood shows that servitude and sincere worship by the Prophet of God (s) became the origin and reason for the prophetic mission of His Holiness.

Domain of administration and governorship

"جِبَايَةَ خَراجِها، وَجِهادَ عَدُوِّها، وَاسْتِصْلاحَ أَهْلِها، وَعِمارَةَ بِلادِها"

«As Governor of Egypt, Malik's duties included collecting its revenues, engaging in Jihad against its enemies, establishing peace and security for its people and bringing prosperity to its cities.»

With this statement, Imam Ali ('a) delineated Malik al-Ashtar's sphere of administration and government into four basic areas:

First: Collection of revenues (taxes and levies)

The term *Kharaj,* implies specific taxes. We know that the Egyptian people did not accept Islam willingly and freely, but under duress, after being conquered. In jurisprudential terminology, lands that the army of Islam occupied by force and conquest, without peace and compromise, are called *Maftuhat al-'Unwah* lands. Such lands are considered the property of all Muslims, and all Muslims are their shareholders. Based on this premise, the government of Islam and the Islamic ruler divided them among Muslims, duly taking Islamic interests into consideration, and placed them at their disposal, and in

return, collected an annual rental. In jurisprudential parlance, rent from such properties is called *Kharaj*. [1]

Second: Defending against the enemies

By adding *Jihad* to *enemies* in the phrase *Jihad with the enemies*, the Imam (‘a) *defense* and not *attack*. Elementary Jihad and advance deployment of the army to make other powers and regimes surrender, takes place only with the permission and supervision of the Immaculate Imam (‘a). During the period of Occultation, embarking on military campaigns and initiating attacks is not permitted. It is evident that Malik was in a region far away from the direct supervision of the Immaculate Imam (‘a). He could resort only to defending Egypt against the military attacks of aliens and regional enemies and not initiate Jihad and embark on aggressive military expeditions.

Third: Reforming the people

The duty of the provincial governor is not confined simply to observe the material aspects and welfare of the people. Reforming and guiding the people is also among the primary tasks of the governor. Therefore, officials need to pay attention to the spiritual aspects of people and play a leading role in promoting spiritual matters. They should not shirk their Islamic duties by thinking that these matters are not their business but the duty of the clergy.

1. For more information, researchers should refer to the late Shaykh Ansary’s book ‘Al-Makasib’.

Fourth: Development of cities etc…

Yet another important and primary duty of Malik was the development and welfare of urban and rural areas and all the territories under the jurisdiction of the provincial government. These words of Imam Ali (‘a), in spite of all the false accusations that have been leveled at Islam, reveal that, in contrast to Christian monasticism, Islam focuses on the material welfare of the Islamic community as well. It considers possession of worldly bounties to be lawful and permissible (rather necessary)to the extent that they do not make a person forget God and lead to injustice, persecution and exploitation of others.

Centralized system or…?

Imam Ali’s(‘a) delegating so much authority (financial affairs, military affairs, judiciary and cultural affairs) to Malik al-Ashtar could mean that the administrative pattern of Islam is a decentralized one, and that Islam is opposed to centralization. But this is not so. The Imam (‘a) adopted a different style with Ash’ath Bin Qais (centralized method) and delegated less authority to him. One needs to search for the differences in the personality of the companions and not in Islam’s administrative style. All the unique characteristics of Malik al-Ashtar, and all the powers that the Imam (‘a) delegated to him, reveal the fact that the Imam (‘a) had cent percent confidence in Malik. Thus, he saw no reason to monitor Malik’s actions and behavior. In contrast, the other companions, who did not possess his characteristics, were delegated lesser powers and their actions and behavior were also placed under greater scrutiny.

"أَمَرَهُ بِتَقْوَى اللهِ"

«Imam Ali (‘a) orders Malik to be fearful of God.»

Imam Ali (‘a) mentioned reforming the people and guiding them as one of Malik’s duties as governor. If this human being is able to bring his carnal passions under control of his rational and spiritual self and shun vain desires and be in complete control of his self, he will have succeeded in guiding an individual (his own inner being). It is with this move that he can be effective outside his own being and guide society towards good. However, if he fails in self-guidance, then how can he be expected to succeed in guiding others!!

Importance of ‘Taqwa’ (fear of God) in the Holy Qur’an

Whenever the Qur’an mentions fear of God, it does not compare the pious believers who fear God with those that follow their lustful passions and mention the privilege of one over the other. Fear of God has been mentioned solely in connection with God:

﴿ إِنَّ أَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتۡقَىٰكُمۡ ﴾

«Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you.» It simply states that the one who fears God is noblest in the sight of God (عِنْدَ اللهِ) and he deals directly with Him. Fear of God results in dignity and this dignity lies in the presence of God.

Fear of God (Taqwa)

What is *Taqwa?* Raghib Isfahani says:

"الْوِقَايَةُ حِفْظُ الشَّيءِ، مِمّا يُؤذِيهُ وَيَضُرُّهُ، وَالتّقْوى جَعْلُ النَّفْس فِي وِقَايَةٍ مِمَّا يُخافُ هَذا تَحْقِيقُهُ، ثُمَّ يُسَمَى الْخَوْفُ تَارَةً تَقْوى وَالْتَقْوى خَوْفَاً، حَسْبُ تَسْمِيَةِ مُقْتَضَى الشّيءِ بِمُقْتَضِيهِ وَالْمُقْتَضى بِمُقْتَضَاهُ وَصَارَ الْتَقْوى فِي تَعَارِيفَ الْشَّرْعِ حِفَظُ الْنَّفْس مِمَّا يَؤُثِمُ وَذَلِكَ بِهِ تَرْكُ الْمَحْظُورَ".

«Wiqayah means preserving a thing from whatever harms or damages it; and taqwa means placing the carnal soul in a wiqayah position from whatever can damage it. However, sometimes, 'fear' is used instead of 'moral integrity' and vice versa. In the norm of religion, taqwa means safeguarding the soul from anything that drives it to commit sin; and it urges a person to desist from prohibitions and inviolable things.»[1-2]

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1. **Mufradat Al Qur'an**, the Word "waqa". .

2. If supposing we accept self-abstinence to also be the definition of *Taqwa* (fear of God); we ask, "Abstinence from what leads to *taqwa*, fear of God? If we mean divine prohibitions, abstinence from prohibitions alone is not enough. Submission to the mandatory acts and practicing them is also a condition for attaining *Taqwa*. It is on the basis of this premise that we say *Taqwa* means self-control and self-abstinence. This meaning embraces both abstaining from divine prohibitions as well as submitting to the mandatory acts and practicing the religious obligations.

From the statements of the Immaculate Imams (‘a), we understand that *taqwa* means self-preservation, vigilance, control and domination over the carnal soul. It does not mean self-abstinence; some isolationists have interpreted Islamic *Taqwa*, to mean living in splendid isolation, shunning society.

Some researchers have defined ‘taqwa’ as meaning ‘fear’ and trepidation in religious terminology.

In our opinion, with regard to the entire verses of the Qur’an and narratives handed down, this meaning of ‘taqwa’ is also not correct, because we read in the Qur’an:

﴿كُتِبَ عَلَيۡكُمُ ٱلصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِكُمۡ لَعَلَّكُمۡ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

“O believers! Prescribed for you is the Fast, even as it was prescribed for those that were before you – haply you will be God-fearing.”[1]

If *Taqwa* means fear and trepidation, does fasting create fear? What is the correlation between fear and fasting? Whereas, if *Taqwa* is used in the sense of self-control and self-abstinence, there is direct correlation between self-abstinence and fasting, because fasting is a practice session for self-abstinence and self-control.

On another occasion, the Qur’an states:

1. *Surah al-Baqarah: 182.*

﴿ٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِۦ﴾

"...fear God as He should be feared..."[1]

Stages of Taqwa (Fear of God)

From the Qur'anic verses and statements of the Nahj al-Balaghah, we deduce that *taqwa* enjoys degrees in Islamic insight. There is no stagnation, cessation in *Taqwa.* By traversing each station, the spiritual traveler needs to traverse another one and reach a new level of *taqwa*. This movement is vast and its perfection so lofty and endless that, except for the Immaculate and Infallible Household of the Prophet (s) or genuine spiritual travelers, no one has and shall have the ability to climb up to its lofty summits. The reason for this perception is some verses of the Qur'an and the statements of the Immaculate Imams ('a) on the subject of *Taqwa*. One of several verses of the Qur'an:

﴿إِنَّ أَكۡرَمَكُمۡ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتۡقَىٰكُمۡ﴾

"Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you."[2]

In the above verse, the term *atqa* means 'the most God-fearing' which demonstrates levels and degrees. This is evidence that there are other 'taqwas' lower than 'atqa' (the most God-fearing). In the famous *Hammam* sermon, Imam Ali ('a) has mentioned more than a hundred unique

1. *Surah al-'Imran: 102.*
2. *Surat al-Hujarat: 13.*

characteristics of the God-fearing individuals. Here, are some sentences of His Holiness:

It is related that one day, *Hammam,* a disciple of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) asked the Imam: ‘O, Amir al-Mu’minin, describe the pious God-fearing individual so that I can see him.’ The Imam (‘a) summarily mentioned some of the special attributes of the God-fearing pious individuals. Hammam was not satisfied with this brief response and insisted that the Imam (‘a) speak further on the subject. Thereupon, the Commander of the Faithful, after praising Almighty Allah and seeking His Salutations for the Holy Prophet (s) asserted:

"... فَالْمُتَّقُونَ فِيها هُمْ أَهْلُ الْفَضَائِلِ: مَنْطِقُهُمُ الْصَّوابُ، وَمَلْبَسُهُمُ الاقْتِصَادُ، وَمَشْيُهُمُ الْتَّواضُعُ، غَضُّوا أَبْصَارَهُمْ عَمّا حَرَّمَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِمْ. . . وَلَوْلا الأَجَلُ الَّذي كَتَبَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِمْ لَمْ تَسْتَقِرَّ أَرْوَاحَهُمْ فِي أَجْسَادِهِمْ طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ شَوْقاً إلى الثَّوابِ وَخَوْفاً مِنَ الْعِقَابِ، عَظُمَ الْخَالِقُ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَصَغُرَ ما دُونَهُ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ. . ."[1]

«.... The God-fearing are the people of distinction. Their speech is to the point; their clothing is moderate and their gait is humble. They shut their eyes on all the things that Allah has forbidden them…if it were not for the fixed period of life (death) ordained for each individual, their souls would not have remained in their bodies even for a moment as brief as the twinkling of an eyelid, because of their appetite for reward and fear of punishment, and they

1. **Nahj al-Balaghah** of Fayz al-Islam, Sermon 184.

would unhesitatingly join with their God. For them only the Creator is great and everything that exists other than He, appears insignificant, lowly and unsubstantial in their sight.»

Hammam who was deeply affected by the words of his master (and was thinking that attaining those attributes was beyond his reach) gave off a loud cry, fell to the ground and lost consciousness. People who attempted to bring him back to consciousness noticed that he had passed away and departed from the transient world.

These statements clearly endorse the stages of *Taqwa*; avoiding Divine prohibitions is one of the stages of Taqwa; humility and subservience is another, while insignificance of all that is in existence besides God Almighty, is a higher stage and….

Path of happiness; path of misery

In Islam, the path to happiness lies in submitting to the Divine commandments while the path of misery lies in disobeying Divine orders. Before we give a detailed explanation of this Islamic yardstick, let us read the next sentences of the master.

"أمَرَهُ بِتَقْوَى الله، وَإيثَارِ طَاعَتِهِ، وَاتّبَاع ما أمَرَ بِهِ فِي كِتَابِهِ: مِنْ فَرَائِضِهِ وَسُنَنِهِ، الَّتي لا يَسْعَدُ أحَدٌ إلا بِاتّبَاعِها وَلا يَشْقى إلا مَعَ جُحُودِها وَإضَاعَتِها".

«Before anything else, Imam Ali ('a) orders Malik to practice Taqwa; be obedient to God Almighty; perform the elective and obligatory deeds He has commanded in

His Book (the Qur’an). Without following the above, no one can achieve happiness, nor can one become wretched except by quitting them.»

The Book of God states all the Islamic traditions and norms because all obligatory, prohibited, abominable and recommended acts are Divinely decreed. From the use of the words ‘no one’ and ‘except’ in the aforesaid sentence the only exceptional path to happiness as well as misery, according to Imam Ali(‘a), is:

“In the world of existence no person in any position and ranking can achieve happiness and prosperity except through obedience of Divine commandments – and that also by performing the obligatory and elective deeds and quitting forbidden acts. Conversely, the sole path to misery also lies in disregarding the divine regulations and disobeying the commandments of God either by not performing obligatory acts or by neglecting them.”

It becomes quite clear that possessing academic degrees and specialization levels does not lead a person to happiness unless he is able to submit to Divine obedience as well. If he submits, his progress shall be more rapid and his degree of *taqwa* higher.

The carnal soul of man is rigid in carnal passions and animal instincts. One needs to deal with it firmly, not sloppily and negligently. In the book *Sawm* (fasting) the eminent Islamic jurisprudents assert that fasting is self-restraint and preservation of the soul from inherent desires. We know that the human soul has a great craving for food and drink in the blessed month of Ramadan, and thus its preservation shall occur forcefully in that month.

Greater Jihad (sacred struggle)

In certain narratives, resisting the carnal soul has been equated to *Jihad*. The word 'Jihad' has been derived from the Arabic word *Jahd*, meaning endeavor, absolute endeavor using all existing skills, forces, and facilities. The expert on Islamic jurisprudence or *Mujtahid* is so called because he utilizes all his abilities to understand the Divine commandments. The warriors in the Path of God are called *Mujahid* because they use all their energies and facilities against the enemy. The Prophet of God (s) has said that resisting the demands of the carnal soul is the Greater Jihad. On this subject, the author of *Wasa'il Ash – Shi'ah* quoting Imam Sadiq ('a), writes:

"مَرْحَباً بِقَوْمٍ قَضَوا الْجِهادَ الأصْغَرَ وَبَقِيَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجِهادُ الأكْبَرُ قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ وَمَا الْجِهادُ الأكْبَرُ؟ قَالَ: جِهادُ النَّفْس".

«Kudos to the group that accomplished the Lesser Jihad (fighting the enemies of God); however, the Greater Jihad (fighting the carnal soul) still remains for them to accomplish." A person, who thought that a more important military expedition was anticipated, queried: "O, Prophet of God! What is the Greater Jihad?" In reply, His Holiness stated: "Jihad with the carnal soul.»[1]

On this subject, the Qur'an states:

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

1. **Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah**, vol. 11, p. 122.

"But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the soul its caprice; surely, Paradise shall be the refuge."[1]

In order to attain paradise and enter the Garden, two basic conditions have been stated: First, the fear of retribution, and the second, controlling the carnal desires. It is clear that fear of the Creator's retribution does not occur without understanding the Creator, while it shall not be possible to keep the carnal desires in check without controlling the carnal soul. A soul, in the words of the Qur'an, commands one to evil and it shall be a difficult and continual struggle to control it. Thus, we must, once again, seek refuge in God and seek His Succor:

"رَبَّنا لا تَجْعَلْنا عَلى نَفْسِنا طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ أبداً".

"وَأن يَنْصُرَ اللهَ سُبْحانَهُ بِقَلْبِهِ وَيَدِهِ وَلِسانِهِ، فَإنَّه ـ جَلَّ إسْمُهُ ـ قَدْ تَكَفَّلَ بِنَصْرِ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ، وَإعْزازِ مَنْ أعَزَّهُ.

وَأمَرَهُ أنْ يَكْسِرَ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْشَّهَواتِ وَنَزَعَها عِنْدَ الْجَمَحاتِ فَإنَّ الْنَّفْسَ أمّارَةٌ بِالْسُّوءِ إلا ما رَحِمَ اللهُ".

«...and to help God, the Glorified, with his heart, hand and tongue; because God, Whose Name is Sublime, assumes the responsibility of helping those who help Him; and of protecting those who support Him. He also commands him to detach his soul from carnal desires and to control it when it rebels, because the carnal soul

1. *Surat al-Nazi'at: 40 & 41.*

constantly commands one to evil, except the soul on which God has mercy.»

Invisible Succor in the shadow of assisting God

Nowadays, more than ever, the question of Divine assistance and invisible succor is discussed and spoken of in our Islamic society. In particular, in the frontline of battle our beloved combatants more than others, felt and came in contact with invisible assistance.

In the Qur'an and the Nahj al-Balaghah, actualization of Divine Succor and invisible assistance is tied to helping Allah. What is meant by helping God? Is God Almighty deficient and needy? Is weakness and failing imaginable in the Divine instrument?

If you say that it means helping the divine religion and commandments of God, then we ask: Is God impotent and incapable of implementing religious canons and His enlightening guidelines?

In order to answer this question, it is essential to discuss one unique characteristic of Divine Canons in comparison with other man-made laws.

Inherent desire, not imposed implementation

The sole objective of worldly legislators is implementation of the law, whether this implementation occurs out of compulsion, concern, or sincere and innate desire. In contrast, the aim and objective of divine and heavenly canons is implementation and of the law through sincere and religious concern and not on the basis of compulsion and obligation.

We see that when income tax is levied on an individual, the aim and objective of the three powers (executive, legislative and judiciary) is to receive the taxes and that too by compulsion, obligation and imposition. However, when Islam devises *Khums, Zakat* and other taxes, it declares that the payer must pay intending nearness to God. The foremost pillar of intent to seek proximity to God is sincere submission to the canons, having sincere conviction in the canon. It is for this reason that the Islamic jurisprudents opine that if a person pays millions as *Khums* without the intention of proximity to Allah, he is like the person who has not paid *Khums*.

Divine prophet-oriented systems are based firmly on the premise that human beings implement Divine canons on the basis of sincere faith according to their intrinsic desire. They do not implement them under compulsion that negates free will. Thus, the best way to realize this divine objective is returning the human being to his intrinsic nature and this itself means assisting Allah and the Exalted Truth. With this view, if a person takes steps, however short, towards self-discovery and reaches his inner self in the path of discovering others and reforming society, he has in fact hastened to the assistance of Allah and to Divine succor.

With regard to Imam Ali’s (‘a) statement, we can achieve this objective in three ways:

First: Succor with the heart

For a person to be able to assist God the Sublime by means of his heart, he needs to undertake self-development and self-purification before anything else. The first step towards self-development and spiritual

training is grooming the heart and soul to be convinced, and have unflinching faith in Divine canons. Next, he must traverse this path with such zeal, faith and sincerity that his belief becomes more and more perfect with every passing day until, not a day passes without having taken one more step than the previous day and without having expanded the range of his faith and belief and strengthened them. In this way, man reaches a point where he gains the strength to take further steps towards this excellence.

Second: Succor with the hand

In the Qur'an:"يد الله فوق ايديهم" means that the Power (Hand) of God is superior to all powers and no power has the strength to rival His Eternal Divine Power. In common parlance, whenever the term 'hand' is used, it signifies 'power'. For instance, when we use the expression that 'his hands are tied', or say, "the hands of destiny shall avenge the oppressed", the term 'hand' typifies power and capability. The purpose is that Malik should take steps to assist God with all his strength and capability. He must use all the available potential at his disposal towards promoting the Divine commandments and canons and channelize all of them towards furthering Islam's sacred objectives.

Third: Succor with the tongue

Nowadays, everybody is aware of the important role that publicity plays. The weapon of publicity is sharper and stronger than any other weapon. The most important and effective means of publicity is the human tongue. If the human tongue – especially of a person who possesses power of oratory and effective speaking – is used with the

intent to corrupt minds, deceive and mislead the people, then it has been used as a deviant and decadent tool of publicity. However, if it is applied to promote Divine laws and commandments, then it has assisted God.

The Inviolable Divine Covenant

Whenever a man rises with his heart, hands and tongue and, with all his strength and energy to assist God, and his entire objective is to establish Divine laws and implement the heavenly doctrine, then assuredly, he shall enjoy the assistance and succor of God as well. He has pledged to assist and provide succor to such an individual:

﴿إِن تَنصُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ يَنصُرۡكُمۡ﴾

"O believers! If you help God, He will help you…"[1]

It is necessary to scrutinize this Divine Covenant from two aspects:

Firstly, God is the Undertaker of the Covenant which is not meaningless like the pledges made by the majority of us. It is an undertaking that is definite and inviolable, and God shall implement it whenever He deems it necessary.

Secondly, the helper is God – and God's power is unlimited and endless. It is thus natural that if God, with His unlimited power helps the limited human being, no power shall have the strength to challenge these human beings.

1. *Surat Muhammad: 7.*

﴿فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ﴾

"...None can overcome you."[1]

Divine succor materialized in the example of Imam Khumayni. The Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran placed all his possessions (wife, children, homeland, education etc…) in the cause of God and towards the objective of implementing the Divine commandments of Islam. In return, Divine succor made him reach the destination that we all witnessed.

Another outcome of the words of Mawla Ali (‘a) is the imposed war of the super-criminals against our Revolutionary nation. Our gallant nation rose to help God with all its strength; and there is no doubt that Divine Succor came to the help of this nation and enabled it to achieve ultimate victory.

Self-forgetfulness

In order to check "self-forgetfulness" that causes conceit, egotism and superiority complex, Imam Ali (‘a) draws Malik's attention to the not so distant past when he criticized others. He reminds him that until yesterday, he and the likes of him were closely monitoring the actions and behavior of officials and criticizing them. Today it was their turn to question his actions and behavior:

1. *Surah al-'Imran: 160.*

"ثُمَّ اعْلَمْ يَا مَالِكُ، أَنِّي قَدْ وَجَّهْتُكَ إِلَى بِلاَد قَدْ جَرَتْ عَلَيْهَا دُوَلٌ قَبْلَكَ، مِنْ عَدْل وَجَوْر، وَأَنَّ النَّاسَ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ أُمُورِكَ فِي مِثْل مَا كُنْتَ تَنْظُرُ فِيهِ مِنْ أُمُورِ الْوُلاَةِ قَبْلَكَ، وَيَقُولُونَ فِيكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَقُولُ فِيهِمْ"

«O Malik, know that I have sent you to an area where there have been governors before you who would behave with justice and equity as well as with oppression and tyranny. [1]Certainly, people will watch your dealings closely as you watched the dealings of those before you; and they shall speak the same things about you as you had spoken about others.»

If the authorities consider only this advice of the master and account for their own performance themselves, and, take only God into consideration and not their own whims and fancies and vain desires, won’t the irregularities and incompetency be done away with?

Reward of the righteous in the world

Considering the fact that in the Divine religion of Islam, no deed is left unrewarded, thus, in addition to the

1. There can be two views regarding what his Holiness meant by ‘governments of justice’ preceding Malik al-Ashtar, and what governments and what persons he was referring to. One, is to say that he meant the term in office of the administration of Sa’d Bin Qays and Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr. The other view is that we believe it refers to the government of His Holiness, Prophet Joseph (‘a). This is because government in the conventional sense of the term does not hold true for the statesmanship of Sa’d Bin Qays and Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr.

rewards and benefits presented to the righteous on the Day of Resurrection, they shall be Divinely rewarded in this world as well. The reward of the righteous in this world is salutation, greeting, acclaim and a good name. These rewards are not only bestowed in the short duration of their governance and lifetime; rather, throughout history and in the everlasting world of existence. In history, the tyrants and illegitimate rulers are totally distinct from the servants and worshippers of God and confront one another. In the course of history, the names of the righteous are mentioned with salutations, greetings of peace and …while the opposite group is constantly cursed and damned. In describing this Divine reward, Imam Ali (‘a) states thus:

" إِنَّمَا يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَى الصَّالِحِينَ بِمَا يُجْرِي اللهُ لَهُمْ عَلَى أَلْسُنِ عِبَادِهِ. فَلْيَكُنْ أَحَبَّ الذَّخَائِرِ إِلَيْكَ ذَخِيرَةُ الْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ".

«Surely, the righteous are distinguished from the criminals; known by the words that Allah causes the people to utter with their tongues. Thus, the most precious of collections in your possession should be the collection of good deeds.»

These words of the Master have been taken from the Glorious Qur’an:

﴿إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ سَيَجۡعَلُ لَهُمُ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنُ وُدّٗا﴾

"Surely those who believe and do deeds of righteousness – unto them the All-Merciful shall assign love (they shall be beloved among the people)."[1]

The above verse reveals that the righteous always find a place in the hearts of people and shall be loved and respected. Human beings will demonstrate this love and behave according to the wishes and will of their beloved. One may assert that a man must possess a good reputation in the presence of God and the Divine Threshold, otherwise, enjoying a good reputation among the people can make no real difference to a person's state of affairs. One may also ask whether not having a good reputation among the people can reduce a person's true standing? A good reputation in human society certainly has many benefits and two personalities will be quoted as examples.

"A person who is loved by society shall certainly be trusted by it. On the strength of this confidence and trust the individual and personal energies of a man are transformed into a social capability and the same person is able to carry out hundreds and thousands of deeds and actions. A concrete example of this benefit was the spiritual power of the Leader of the Nation, Imam Khumayni, that drew the forty-million strong population of Islamic Iran onto the streets and avenues so that the protest marches in which several million people participated succeeded in toppling the two-thousand five-hundred year-old despotic monarchical regime. All the

1. *Surah Maryam: 96.*

tumult, fervor and sentiment of the people for the Revolution's leadership was due to their sincere trust and confidence in it. If this trust and affection for the Leader of the Nation (Imam Khumayni) was lacking, would the Imam still be able to initiate such a movement that would lead to the Revolution?

We all know that the weapon of publicity is the most powerful of weapons. One of the important methods of publicity is to remind and mention the deeds, actions and behavior of the righteous creatures of God. This sort of reminding is not promoting a person; rather, it is acclaiming the righteous deed and the 'adoption of a standpoint' by the righteous. If we praise Martyr Ayatollah Mortada Mutahhari (the righteous clergyman of Islam), we do not praise the person; rather, we praise Islam, the spirituality of Islam and ultimately, the righteous deed."

Good Name: An Eschatological Document of the Righteous

On the Day of Resurrection when, in the words of the Qur'an, [1] every person shall be rewarded or punished for the smallest deed, the righteous shall enjoy an exclusive privilege. Almighty God will mention their good deeds and good name as testimony for their goodness and shall not go into the details of their biography. In this manner, He will facilitate the freedom of the righteous and shall provide them with the bounties of Paradise.

1."*And whoso has done an atom's weight of good shall see it; and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it."* (*Surah al-Zalzalah: 7 & 8.)*

Importance of a righteous deed

In Islam’s culture, the existential composition of man is made up of two dimensions:

– The material and earthy

– The spiritual and compassionate

These two aspects, together with the free-will that a human being possesses, places him in the quagmire of immorality, loss and harm, so that he can rescue himself only through faith and righteous deeds which urge him towards the truth and patience. In one of the short *surahs* of the Qur’an we read:

﴿وَٱلۡعَصۡرِ ۝١ إِنَّ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ لَفِي خُسۡرٍ ۝٢ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلۡحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوۡاْ بِٱلصَّبۡرِ﴾

“Surely, man is in loss; save those who believe, and do righteous deeds; and counsel each other unto the truth; and counsel each other to be steadfast.”[1]

What is a ‘righteous deed’ and what is the ‘right conduct’?

Now that the importance of a righteous deed has become clear, let us see what it is and what comprises ‘right conduct’. Also, how can a righteous deed be identified?

A righteous deed can be identified in three ways:

1. *Surat al ‘Asr*.

First: through religious obligation

All divine obligations that human beings are mandated to carry out are righteous deeds and if they were not righteous the Compassionate Creator would not command mankind to perform them. Therefore, fasting, daily prayers, Zakat, Khums, Jihad, bidding good and forbidding evil, as well as other Islamic obligations, are all regarded as righteous deeds.

Second: Through extolment and praise

In the Qur'an and the narrated traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), wherever there is talk of extolment and praise, as well as practical description, it testifies to the righteousness of that deed. If it was not righteous, then the God of the Universe would not have described it in the mysteries of creation and extolled it. Consequently, attributes constituting a right conduct are among righteous deeds:

﴿قَدۡ أَفۡلَحَ ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنُونَ ۝١ ٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ فِي صَلَاتِهِمۡ خَٰشِعُونَ ۝٢ وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمۡ عَنِ ٱللَّغۡوِ مُعۡرِضُونَ﴾

"Prosperous are the believers; who in their prayers are humble; and who turn away from idle talking."[1]

In his famous *Hammam* sermon, Imam Ali ('a) in describing the characteristics and conduct of 'those that fear God' (the *Muttaqin*) states:

1. *Surat al-Mu'minin: 1-3.*

"مَنْطِقُهُمُ الصَّوَابُ، وَمَلْبَسُهُمُ الاْقْتِصَادُ، وَمَشْيُهُمُ التَّوَاضُعُ. . . عَظُمَ الْخَالِقُ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَصَغُرَ مَا دُونَهُ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ. . . حَاجَاتُهُمْ خَفِيفَةٌ، وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ عَفِيفَةٌ. . . وَصَبْراً فِي شِدَّة، وَطَلَباً فِي حَلاَل. . . خَاشِعاً قَلْبُهُ، قَانِعَةً نَفْسُهُ".

«Their speech is honest and sincere; their clothing is simple and their gait, humble. They shut their eyes to what Allah has made unlawful for them; and they lend their ears to that knowledge which is beneficial to them…they view their Creator with greatness and except Him everything else appears small in their sight…their needs are scanty and their souls are chaste…they endure hardship patiently for a short while and in consequence, they secure comfort for a long time…the heart, fearing, the spirit, contented.»[1]

Third: Through statement

The Glorious Qur'an declares categorically that righteous deeds shall be written for the *Mujahideen* in exchange for those unique attributes which they demonstrated:

﴿مَا كَانَ لِأَهْلِ ٱلْمَدِينَةِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُم مِّنَ ٱلْأَعْرَابِ أَن يَتَخَلَّفُواْ عَن رَّسُولِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا يَرْغَبُواْ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ عَن نَّفْسِهِۦ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ لَا يُصِيبُهُمْ ظَمَأٌ وَلَا نَصَبٌ وَلَا مَخْمَصَةٌ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا يَطَـُٔونَ مَوْطِئًا يَغِيظُ ٱلْكُفَّارَ وَلَا يَنَالُونَ مِنْ عَدُوٍّ نَّيْلًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُم بِهِۦ عَمَلٌ صَٰلِحٌ ۚ

1. **Nahj al-Balaghah** of Fayz al-Islam, sermon 194.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجۡرَ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ١٢٠ وَلَا يُنفِقُونَ نَفَقَةٗ صَغِيرَةٗ وَلَا كَبِيرَةٗ وَلَا يَقۡطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمۡ لِيَجۡزِيَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ أَحۡسَنَ مَا كَانُواْ يَعۡمَلُونَ ١٢١

"It is not for the people of Madina and for the Bedouins who dwell around them to stay behind God's Messenger, and to prefer their lives to his because they are smitten neither by thirst, nor fatigue, nor hunger in the Way of God, they neither tread any path which enrages the unbelievers, nor receive any (injury) from any enemy, but a righteous deed is thereby written to their account; God does not waste the wage of the good-doers. They do not expend any sum, small or great; nor traverse any valley, but it is written in their account, that God may recompense them with the best for what they were doing."[1]

Introversion and control of the carnal soul

Islam demands custodians who are emancipated and free of any sort of evil promptings of the carnal soul. Imam Ali ('a) had established a perfect model of Islamic government and while dispatching Malik to the provincial capital, addressed him thus:

" فَامْلِكْ هَوَاكَ".

«O Malik, control your passions and restrain your heart.»

1. *Surah al-Tawbah: 120 & 121.*

In the words of the Master (‘a) what is the connection between self-control and righteous deed? Is self-control a righteous deed?

Self-control (control over the carnal soul) is one of the connotations of righteous deeds and a righteous deed is not only an action performed by the hands and feet as well as other organs of the body.”Deeds of the heart” are deeds related to internal issues. The best testimony is the Glorious Qur’an which states:

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ۝٤٠ فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

“But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the soul its caprice, surely Paradise shall be his refuge.”[1]

It means that on the way to excellence, the human being needs to forbid its evil-prompting soul and restrain it from indecencies. Controlling the evil-prompting carnal soul is a righteous deed and perhaps the most important. This importance has its origins in the words of the beloved Prophet of Islam (s) when he had stated:

”لَوْلا تَكْثيرٌ فِي كَلامِكُمْ وَتَمْريجٌ فِي قُلُوبكُمْ لَرَأَيْتُمْ ما أرى وَلَسَمِعْتُمْ ما أسْمَعُ”.

1. *Surah al-Nazi’at: 39 & 40.*

«If it were not for your unwarranted speaking and licentiousness in your heart you would see whatever I see and hear whatever I hear.»[1]

Some people believe that controlling the evil-prompting carnal soul is not a righteous deed but, a prelude to a righteous deed. It means that if a person wants to perform a righteous deed, he must have prior control over his evil-prompting soul and vain desires.

Regulation of instincts

Unlike Freud, who regards sexual freedom as a constructive factor; and unlike false claimants of monasticism, who believe in the total suppression of instincts, Islam believes that all human instincts entrusted in the human being on behalf of the Wise God are not a source of evil, immorality, or an obstacle in the path of Truth. It also opines that a human being can make use of all of his instincts by lawful means and enjoy all worldly pleasures within the framework of Islamic yardsticks. Thus, in a single sentence, one can say that Islam believes in regulating the instincts, not totally suppressing them. Islam has rejected both rampant sexual freedom and monasticism.

In assertion of the fact, Imam Ali (‘a) states:

"وَشُحَّ بِنَفْسِكَ عَمَّا لاَ يَحِلُّ لَكَ، فَإِنَّ الشُّحَّ بِالنَّفْس الإنصَافُ مِنْهَا فَيما أَحْبَبْتَ وَكَرِهْتَ".

1. **Al-Mizan**, vol. 5, p. 292.

«…And control your passions and restrain yourself from doing what is not lawful for you; because restraining yourself in connection with things that you either desire or dislike is justice per se.»

Islam and the false claimants of human rights

The false claimants of human rights vociferously demand equal rights for all human beings, but in practice, do not practice it; rather, they do not attach an iota of importance to the minorities in their countries. Not only do they not support the minorities in earning a livelihood, security and peace, they massacre them in groups.

In the last century itself, Europeans, who claim to be civilized and modern, resorted to massacring Jews. According to available documents, in territories under occupation of Hitler’s regime, six million Jews were sent to various concentration camps all over Europe by Eichmann and other Nazi war criminals and burnt to ashes in gas chambers. In the past centuries, followers of Jesus Christ(‘a), who had preached love and kindness for fellow-men, perpetually resorted to torturing and killing minorities and followers of other religions. One horrific specimen was their launching of the Crusades against Muslims that continued for successive centuries and culminated in the slaying of millions of Muslims. Again, in our own era, not only has the usurper Zionist regime forcibly occupied the homes, dwellings and lands of Palestinian Muslims; rather, they do not grant the original inhabitants of that land the right to a simple and hard life in their own country. Every few days they kill a large number of them and expel and displace a number of others to uninhabitable regions.

But Islam does not behave in such a fashion. The proof that validates this claim is the practical approach of the government under the leadership of Imam Khumayni to wards religious minorities (that enjoy true equality and freedom); and the words of Imam Ali (‘a):

"وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ، وَالْـمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ، وَاللُّطْفَ بِهِمْ، وَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبُعاً ضَارِياً تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ: إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّين، وَإِمّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ، يَفْرُطُ مِنْهُمُ الزَّلَلُ، وَتَعْرِضُ لَهُمُ الْعِلَلُ، يُؤْتَى عَلَى أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الَعَمْدِ وَالْخَطَاَ، فَأَعْطِهِمْ مِنْ عَفْوِكَ وَصَفْحِكَ مِثْلَ الَّذِي تُحِبُّ أَنْ يُعْطِيَكَ اللهُ مِنْ عَفْوِهِ وَصَفْحِهِ، فَإِنَّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ، وَوَالِي الأَمْرِ عَلَيْكَ فَوْقَكَ، وَاللهُ فَوْقَ مَنْ وَلاكَ! وَقَدِ اسْتَكْفَاكَ أَمْرَهُمْ، وَابْتَلاَكَ بِهِمْ".

«Make, love of the people, their friendship, and compassion towards them, the slogan of your heart. Do not behave like a savage beast towards the subjects who waits for an opportunity to devour them; because the subjects are generally of two types: they are either your brethren in religion or your fellow-species in creation. They are bound to blunder and commit mistakes. They may act wrongfully either consciously or unconsciously. Thus, in the same way that you (in relation to your own sins), expect God to pardon you, similarly pardon them as well; because you are higher than they and higher than you is the person who entrusted you with this custodianship (Imam Ali), and higher than him who has appointed you, is God. He has delegated you to manage the affairs of the people and has put you on trial through them.»

By classifying the subjects, His Holiness counsels Malik to behave impartially towards all individuals in society, to treat them with equality, and to grant the rights equitably of every individual unit of the nation without the least discrimination.

Motives of immorality and decadence

In the statement of His Holiness, we come to know of the motives and tendencies of decadence, sin, and wrongdoing. This is because occasionally, the motives manifest immorality and debauchery. We see that although weakness of faith itself is the cause of committing fornication and adultery, yet, we must not overlook the role of emotional deficiencies in families, between husband and wife, or disregard character and psychic differences, forced marriages etc. , each of which can become a motive to commit fornication.

Concepts of infallibility, justice and immoral behavior

In order to clarify the statements of His Holiness, we need to mention a few jurisprudential terms:

Persons who commit sinful acts recklessly are known as *Fasiq*, (lewd, evil-doers)in jurisprudential terminology. In contrast, persons who control the evil-prompting carnal soul and, are able to avoid divine prohibitions and perform obligatory acts, religious customs and duties enthusiastically, are called 'just' individuals in jurisprudential terminology. This state is not permanent and it is possible that after a period of time it degenerates or becomes incapable of saving a person from debauchery

and decadence. It is for this reason that we observe that some people will not commit such types of immoral acts when offered a small sum of illicit money. However, it is not improbable that when such individuals are offered huge sums, they are carried away and commit faux pas. Some others have the disposition to control themselves and resist the evil promptings of the carnal soul in the face of postings such as management of an institution or directorship of an organization etc… but, in the face of a ministerial position, they are willing to commit sinful acts in order to secure the top ministerial office.

All of these are deliberate and conscious cases, meaning that the just person is one who due to his disposition to justice does not commit sin in case he is conscious and is not forgetful. However wrongdoing in a state of oblivion is neither considered a sin nor immorality in the Presence of God and the Court of the Essence of Sacred Divinity, nor put on trial, for it does not lessen the integrity of the person.

Beyond the state of justice, infallibility is a condition that protects the Immaculate Imams (‘a) permanently and perpetually from all sins in a state of consciousness and forgetfulness. It is due to this condition that the Immaculate Imams (‘a) never act sinfully.

Can an Immaculate Imam commit sin?

If the infallibility of the Immaculate Imam (‘a) is that he does not commit a sin because he is not capable of sinning, then this type of infallibility is neither considered a virtue, nor can it be regarded as the reason for superiority. However, if it means that the Immaculate

Imam (‘a)is capable but does not sin, then what is this state and how is it illustrated?

In order to respond to this question and clarify the concept of infallibility, we need to mention an abstract:

Ordinary human beings have infallibility in relation to certain sins. They are capable of committing the sinful deed, yet they never and shall never commit it. Revealing the private parts is an indecent act and contrary to the rules of Islam. Any sane person at the same time as being able to expose his private parts in full view of the public never performs this act in a state of mental equilibrium. Why does a sane person not commit this wicked act? Because the immorality and ugliness of this act is perfectly clear to him and he is aware of its depravity. Now with this view, we bring the divine prophets into the picture. Prophets (‘a)and the Immaculate Imams (‘a) do not commit sinful and evil deeds despite being capable and having the aptitude for it. Why is it so? Just as ordinary individuals become fully aware of the immorality of a deed, they never perform it, and attain a state of infallibility vis-à-vis quitting one or several deeds, similarly, the Immaculate Imams (‘a) are aware of the immorality of all evil deeds, they have a state of infallibility, albeit on a much larger scale in relation to all ugly deeds and they never commit acts that are contrary to the divine regulations.

Key to infallibility in a state of forgetfulness

It was said that scope of infallibility of the Immaculate Imams (‘a) is wider than that of ordinary human beings because they are infallible in relation to all deeds and

even in a state of oblivion they do not violate the divine precepts. What is the key to their infallibility in a state of forgetfulness? In other words, what is wrong if the Immaculate Imams (‘a) commit a sin and violate the Divine precepts in a state of forgetfulness (unconsciously)! After all, immorality and sin in a state of forgetfulness is not considered a lapse and mistake and God shall not put on trial deeds committed in a state of forgetfulness!

Prophets(‘a), according to the Qur’an, are “announcers and givers of warning, ”besides being responsible for guiding and leading society. If the leader of society mistakenly or unconsciously commits a blunder, his stature diminishes and his popular base is weakened. It is for this reason that we say the Prophets (‘a)and Immaculate Imams (‘a) are infallible in all circumstances (premeditated and spontaneous) and they do not commit blunders or crimes.

Violence with people is like declaration of war on God

Imam Ali (‘a) believed that violence with people and cruelty to the creatures of God is like declaring war against God. Subsequently, tyrants and oppressors are destined to certain defeat and permanent collapse because no powerful person has the strength to challenge the Creator of the Universe (who Himself is the giver of power to all the powerful people) and no ruler can do without Divine Amnesty and Compassion.

"وَلاَ تَنْصِبَنَّ نَفْسَكَ لِحَرْبِ الله، فَإِنَّهُ لا يَدَيْ لَكَ بِنِقْمَتِهِ، وَلا غِنَى بِكَ عَنْ عَفْوِهِ وَرَحْمَتِهِ، وَلاَ تَنْدَمَنَّ عَلَى عَفْو، وَلاَ تَبْجَحَنَّ بِعُقُوبَة، وَلاَ تُسْرِعَنَّ إِلَى بَادِرَة وَجَدْتَ مِنْهَا مَنْدُوحَةً".

«By using violence against the people do not set yourself in a position of confrontation with God because you are powerless in relation to His Vengeance (and wrath) and you cannot do without His (the Creator's) Amnesty and Compassion. Do not regret forgiving or showing mercy (towards subjects); and do not be overcome with delight in handing down punishment; and, on no account, act hastily when in anger, for (it causes you to take unnecessarily harsh measures), it is possible that you find a way out.»

Dictatorship

Arrogance and dictatorship originates from self-conceit, egocentrism, self-glorification, pride and megalomania, and leads a person to be authoritative and despotic in opinion, imposing his belief on others.

A ruler, who holds the reins of affairs of Muslims with this attitude, ultimately resorts to bullying, lying, abusing rights and intimidating his subjects. He destroys religion (even the blessed religion of Islam), and the Muslims switch to humiliation from glory and from happiness to misery and suffering.

"وَلاَ تَقُولَنَّ: إِنِّي مُؤَمَّرٌ آمُرُ فَأُطَاعُ، فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ إِدْغَالٌ فِي الْقَلْبِ، وَمَنْهَكَةٌ لِلدِّين، وَتَقَرُّبٌ مِنَ الْغِيَرِ".

«Do not say that 'I now have authority over them so it is for me to give orders and for them to obey me'. This is because it demoralizes the heart, weakens the religion, and brings one closer to ruin (and withdrawal of Divine blessing).»

Eliminating arrogance

Dictatorship has its origins in selfishness, egotism, self-glorification, pride and megalomania and all these have their origin in ignorance and folly. If a human being recognizes his physical and spiritual make-up and becomes aware of his own impotence and incapability in relation to the sacred essence of Divinity and comes to know that whatever he had and has is from Him and returns to Him and that بحول الله اقوم واقعد he shall abandon his pride and insurgency and feel ashamed of his brazen outbursts. In order to urge Malik to self-introspect and remind him of his standing and station in relation to the greatness and power of Divinity of the Glorious God, Imam Ali ('a) states:

"وَإِذَا أَحْدَثَ لَكَ مَا أَنْتَ فِيهِ مِنْ سُلْطَانِكَ أُبَّهَةً أَوْ مَخِيلَةً، فَانْظُرْ إِلَى عِظَمِ مُلْكِ اللهِ فَوْقَكَ، وَقُدْرَتِهِ مِنْكَ عَلَى مَا لاَ تَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ، فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ يُطَامِنُ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ طِمَاحِكَ، وَيَكُفُّ عَنْكَ مِنْ غَرْبِكَ، يَفِيءُ إِلَيْكَ بِمَا عَزَبَ عَنْكَ مِنْ عَقْلِكَ!".

«Whenever the authority and station invested in you produces pride and spins dreams in your heart, take a look at the greatness of the Might of God which is superior to yours and compare His Superior Might with

yours and over which you do not have any control. This shall curb your conceit, bring your temper under control, and restore your wisdom.»

Vanity and egotism

The intoxication of power blinds a human being and leads to ignorance and man starts perceiving his power to be at par with the infinite power of Divinity. For the suppression of such destructive arrogance, the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (‘a) states thus:

"إِيَّاكَ وَمُسَامَاةَ الله فِي عَظَمَتِهِ، وَالتَّشَبُّهَ بِهِ فِي جَبَرُوتِهِ، فَإِنَّ اللهَ يُذِلُّ كُلَّ جَبَّار، وَيُهِينُ كُلَّ مُخْتَال".

«Desist from comparing yourself in greatness to Allah or likening your power to His Power; for Allah humiliates any claimant to power and disgraces every arrogant and proud individual.»

With his unique diligence and subtle thinking, Imam Ali (‘a) talks about persons who make claims to omnipotence and liken themselves to the Sacred Essence in a matter that is exclusive to God. The implication is that no one can truly be likened to God in the station of Almightiness as well as Glory and Omnipotence. ‘A creature can never be like the Creator’; but the creature (Pharoah) can foolishly assume such a similarity or resemblance in himself. His Holiness asserts: “What I consider reprehensible and warn about is, that it is not permissible to make comparisons with the Omnipotence of God in a situation where Omnipotence belongs solely to God.”

It is neither a power that has value and strength of its own, nor is it self-dependent and nor is it sourced in our existence; rather, all these worldly powers that have their roots either in a fleeting position or in a post or chairmanship, are subordinate powers and a longitudinal extension of the Power of God. This is quite certain because, after all, we have no power in the phenomena of God's Power. We regard this issue to be indubitable and regard even the smallest of our movements such as sitting and standing up to be dependent on Divine Will, and say: بحول الله وقوه اقوم واقعد (it is by the will and power of God that our standing up and sitting down takes place), otherwise we would not be able to move. Any power that we have is a minute particle of the eternal and infinite Divine power that has been placed in our hands; and, it is also not known where it shall lead to, how long it will last, and at what time it shall be taken back from us. Is it right for a person to take this power from God and then attribute one stage of the exclusive omnipotence of God to himself and establish omnipotence for himself on the same lines as that of God, and regard his power on the same latitude as that of God?

His Holiness states: 'O Man! O humble creature! In this vast world of existence, who are you and what are you and what have you got that you dare to consider the station of omnipotence and almightiness for yourself?'

He, who considers himself to be 'error Free', is in' Total error'

This is a warning from the Commander of the Faithful Ali ('a) to those individuals who rise to worldly positions

and forget who they were, and transgress their limits. Man is a creature that is error-prone and most of the time commits blunders that cause irreparable damage. These blows are more painful when the person has no ill intentions; rather, he has entered the fray with the intent to serve and wishes to work towards the welfare of the people with the consent of the Creator. However, his human slip-ups while fulfilling satanic temptations lead him to his utter destruction. It is here that the issue takes on a more startling form and becomes more regrettable. One fundamental flaw of man is that he assumes that he is exempt from the afflictions that affect other individuals of mankind. For instance, he takes the wrong step yet mistakenly thinks that he is not prone to any error – and this itself is another slip-up that topples him into the pit of total error. One of the biggest failings of power is that it plays an amazing role in causing human beings to become negligent and blundering.

Man usually suffers from this spiritual weakness so that as soon as he becomes powerful, he thinks that this power is fixed and permanent for him and that there is no reason for its decline, whereas time and again, it has been observed that powers have come into existence and been exterminated after a short while.

Observing justice and fighting injustice

What is meant by being fair with God and being fair with people?

"أَنْصِفِ اللهَ وَأَنْصِفِ النَّاسَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ، وَمِنْ خَاصَّةِ أَهْلِكَ، وَمَنْ لَكَ فِيهِ هَوىً مِنْ رَعِيَّتِكَ، فَإِنَّكَ إِلا تَفْعَلْ تَظْلِمْ".

«Behave justly with God and with the people; whether it is on behalf of God, whether it is on behalf of particular individuals in the family and close acquaintances, and whether it is on behalf of subjects for whom you have a special fondness and inclination. Observe justice, for if you do otherwise, you would be doing injustice.»

Basically, this statement of the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) incorporates two vital thoughts: one is that we should take the instructions of God - including all that He has bidden or forbidden – into consideration and implement them properly. The other is that we should always acknowledge Divine bounties and blessings and be grateful, thankful and appreciative of them.

A human being does not appreciate the worth of his sound health as long as he is enjoying good health because when he has healthy teeth and eats his daily food without any problem, he does not perhaps think even for a moment of being blessed with such a fine set of teeth. Or to give another example, when his feet are sound and he goes from one point to another without any problem, performs his movements and is full of zeal and motion, in the course of several hours of walking, he may not reflect even for a second on the enormous blessing of having such healthy feet. However, if one of the teeth decay and he is hit by the pain, the world becomes a living hell for him. The problem no longer his inability to chew food properly; rather, the intensity of the pain prevents him from performing any task properly, his eyes and ears are affected and he cannot see or hear very well, his mind is foggy and he is unable to think clearly. He simply groans in pain and just then realizes what a wonderful blessing

known as 'teeth' was present in his mouth, of which he seldom took notice and seldom reflected on their essential worth. Or for instance, when he hurts his feet and is no longer able to move and walk and must inevitably sit motionless in a corner; it is then that he realizes what a great blessing it was to have had two healthy feet.

Just think about this and consider the rest on your own. Consider each and every one of the blessings that you have today and then imagine the day when God forbid, all of these blessings are totally obliterated or are even slightly disrupted. Then, imagine the devastating problems that you shall endure – both physically and spiritually - as a result of this small affair, and how it will prevent you from living normal life.

It is here that the question of doing justice to God becomes important. One part of doing justice to God is being grateful for His Bounties – by obeying and implementing the Divine rules and instructions. Despite the innumerable blessings and bounties that God has showered on him, is it fair that man should continue to be ungrateful and disobey God's regulations that have been devised in a very simple form to ensure his very own happiness? What difference will it make to Him whether we, weak, insignificant creatures, obey His rules or not?

It is strange that we human beings feel a sense of shame, embarrassment, gratitude and thanksgiving in relation to other human beings but do not feel the same in relation to God. Why don't we consider it our moral obligation to give thanks and be grateful to God in the face of so many favors that God has done to us and all the Divine bounties, blessings and favors He has provided us with?

From this statement, we conclude that any sort of ingratitude in relation to the Divine blessings and favors bestowed; as well as any type of opposition and disobedience of God's commandments is a kind of injustice to the Sacred Divine Presence.

Being just with people

Justice for the people means that the right of every person should be respected fully and equitably. The ruler must behave impartially with the people in two ways: first, in relation with himself (whether concerning administrative issues or personal ones); and, in relation with relatives, friends and those of his inner circle.

For instance in an Islamic government, at the time of dividing the spoils of war, the ruler's justice implies that he views each and every individual with equity and divides the properties equally among Muslims. In personal matters as well, if the ruler is a neighbor of one of the subjects, he has no right on the strength of being neighbors to impose anything on him. If he wishes to sell merchandise to him or buy it from him, he has no right to impose a deal on him and sell his merchandise at the highest price and buy his merchandise at the lowest price. In both instances, he must implement what is considered just, fair and equitable.

During the rule of the illegitimate regime we witnessed businessmen, because of the power of those at the top of the hierarchy, selling them their best merchandise at a lower than normal rate (and even lower than the cost price) – and this was the practice in case of buying and selling. On many occasions, they would send their best

merchandise as complimentary straight to the residence of the state officials and those in power.

These were two instances of fairness with the people. The third instance is in connection with the relatives and inner circle of the ruler. The ruler must not allow his inner circle to act unfairly with the people by relying on his patronage. Every person has a soft corner for his own relatives – particularly his own kith and kin – and may be drawn to lend them his support or take a position in their favor. This is not how the ruler should be and if such a situation occurs and he sees his relatives and inner circle dealing unjustly with others, justice and equity demands that he prevent the people's rights from being trampled upon.

To whom is the unjust person accountable?

We understand from the following statement of His Holiness, **"مَنْ ظَلَمَ عِبَادَ اللهِ كَانَ اللهُ خَصْمَهُ"** that an unjust person opposes Allah. It means that when the servants of God are oppressed, He inflicts His wrath and chastisement on the oppressor and sends down His punishment. After all, in the words of the Prophet of Islam (s) **"الْخَلْقُ عِيالُ اللهِ"**[1] which means that the servants of God are regarded as part of God's family and all human beings are under Divine guardianship and support. It is clear that when injustice is done to human beings and they are not able to defend themselves and bring the tyrant to justice, God Himself intervenes and opposes the oppressors and tyrants.

1. **Usul al-Kafi**, vol. 2, p. 164.

The relationship of God with His servants – as the Principal Creator of the servants - is by far greater and more essential than the father-child relationship. When you see an injustice being done to your child, you view that injustice as being directed at your own self and take action to confront the injustice and fight the oppressor. When injustice is being done to a servant of God, the angry reprisal of the Almighty is far more powerful, more intense and quicker than that of a father and He becomes the opponent of the tyrant to fight the injustice.

"وَمَنْ ظَلَمَ عِبَادَ الله كَانَ اللهُ خَصْمَهُ دُونَ عِبَادِهِ، وَمَنْ خَاصَمَهُ اللهُ أَدْحَضَ حُجَّتَهُ، وَكَانَ لله حَرْباً حَتَّى يَنْزِعَ وَيَتُوبَ".

«God becomes the opponent of any person who does injustice to the creatures of God, on behalf of His creatures, and when God becomes the opponent of any person, He tramples his plea. Such a person will always remain in a situation of war with God until he either dies and he is not able to commit injustice or he repents and returns to the fold of God's commandment.»

Vision in use of words

In the Nahj al-Balaghah, His Holiness has used such subtlety of speech that the mind of ordinary human beings cannot grasp their profound meaning. In the previous chapter, he uses the word 'Naas' (human being) when considering the inalienable rights that people should enjoy in a government of Islamic justice, and states: "انصف الناس". On another occasion, he uses the word "subjects" (رعیت) for a group that is living under the administration of Islamic canons.

However, when he wants to discuss the subject of 'injustice' and place God opposite the tyrant, he gives another name, 'عباد الله. (devoted servants of God), that conveys the meaning of both the people as well as their relationship with God.

Certain defeat of the tyrant

It is evident that when God unmasks the false and specious face of the tyrant and people get to see his true face of oppression and tyranny based on carnal desires and passions, they rise in opposition to him by putting their trust in God. In this battle God assists the downtrodden; the people triumph and the tyrant is defeated, so the true connotation of the words of His Holiness can "أَدْحَضَ حُجَّتَهُ" be realized.

The Tyrant's Repentance

Although Islam condemns injustice as an abomination, immoral and sinful which God quickly confronts. However, He does not shut the door completely on the tyrant. The Most Beneficent God forgives the sins of any sinner who repents. God continues to be his opponent as long as he continues to be tyrannical and does not repent. Thus, God opposes him (حَتَّى يَنْزِعَ وَيَتُوبَ) until he quits doing injustice and repents for his oppressive behavior. If his repentance is sincere, God forgives his sins, accepts his repentance and ceases to confront and oppose him.

Of course, repentance has its own conditions that need to be observed. If a person has trampled on the rights of a human being, it is not enough that he decides not to oppress the right of an individual or the public from then

onwards; rather he must use all the means and energy at his disposal to restore the human right to its owner and gain the consent of the creature of God whose right he has abused. For instance, if a person obtains the assets of a person by force and becomes rich through unlawful means, it is not enough for him to say that from then on he would enjoy this unlawfully acquired wealth and riches that others have toiled and endured hardships for and live in luxury in this world. Because he has repented for his past injustices and decided to desist from committing such injustices, he would be pardoned by God in the afterlife and, as a result, both his material world and his afterlife would be secured!! No! This is an attempt to deceive God. But one cannot engage in deception, trickery and dishonesty with God because He works the highest degree of deception against such individuals; a deception that the entire deceptions deployed by man appear pale and ineffectual in front of it.

Thus, a person, who repents, must restore the right he has oppressed to its rightful owner, gain his consent, and submit to the commands of God. In such circumstances God accepts genuine repentance accompanied with honesty and sincerity.

Effect of the cry of the oppressed

The result of sinning is that blessings and honor are transformed into misery and humiliation while some speed up Divine chastisement and descent of misfortunes.

After all what is the oppressed person's demand and call? When an oppressed person comes face to face with a powerful tyrant and does not have the strength to confront

him and ward off his injustice, he seeks the succor of God. He calls upon the One Creator and His Strength. What is his plea and what does he want from God? His plea is: "O God, withdraw the power of this tyrant so that he is rendered incapable of repressing people. Take back the blessings that Thou hast bestowed on him so that he is disgraced and humiliated and is rendered incapable of disgracing and humiliating others. Afflict him with Thy Chastisement so that the pleas of the innocent who have been oppressed by him are avenged and this tyrant is duly punished for the injustices he has committed and…"

The pleas of the oppressed are of this sort and God responds to the cry of the innocent oppressed instantly, the bounties of the tyrant are speedily reversed into retribution and his honor into humiliation:

"وَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَدْعَى إِلَى تَغْيِيرِ نِعْمَةِ اللهِ وَتَعْجِيلِ نِقْمَتِهِ مِنْ إِقَامَةٍ عَلَى ظُلْمٍ، فَإِنَّ اللهَ سَمِيعٌ دَعْوَةَ الْمَظْلُومِينَ، وَهُوَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بِالْمِرْصَادِ."

«No factor is more effective and wider in reversing God's bounty (into humiliation and misfortune) and in hastening and speeding up God's retribution than persistence in the resolve of oppressors to commit oppression; God waits to punish the oppressors only until He hears the invocations and prayers of the oppressed.»

Criterion of the ruler's decision-making

The ruler's decision-making must be based on Islamic criterion and yardsticks. The criteria for employment of manpower and any type of administrative decision-taking shall be establishment of right, justice, and improvement

in the welfare, comfort and satisfaction of the common people:

"وَلْيَكُنْ أَحَبَّ الأُمُورِ إِلَيْكَ أَوْسَطُهَا فِي الْحَقِّ، وَأَعَمُّهَا فِي الْعَدْلِ، وَأَجْمَعُهَا لِرِضَى الرَّعِيَّةِ، فَإِنَّ سُخْطَ الْعَامَّةِ يُجْحِفُ بِرِضَى الْخَاصَّةِ، وَإِنَّ سُخْطَ الْخَاصَّةِ يُغْتَفَرُ مَعَ رِضَى الْعَامَّةِ".

«...And your favorite tasks must be those that are the most balanced and equitable in terms of the truth, the most universal and embracing in terms of justice, and the most comprehensive and harmonious by way of people's consent, for undoubtedly, the anger of the masses nullifies the consent and pleasure of the elite and eminent personalities of society, whereas, the anger of the elite shall be recompensed by the consent of the masses.»

Observance of right and justice does not imply dreaming up a utopia which halts pragmatic decision-making and draws the ruler towards absolutism and idealism. It is for this reason that by stating الخلق فی اوسطها His Holiness calls upon the ruler to be realistic and respect what society has to offer and while supporting the truth he should respect that which is closest to the truth and more practical, and not absolve himself of his responsibility on the pretext that the truth cannot be implemented in the real sense of the term.

It is with this realism on the subject of observing justice that Imam Ali ('a) calls upon Malik to take into consideration all that incorporates the most dimensions of justice. Finally, after the implementation of truth and justice, he considers gaining the consent of the masses

and ensuring their prosperity and welfare to be the yardstick of the Islamic ruler’s orientation.

Why so much of emphasis on consent and satisfaction of the people?

The ruled are divided into two groups:

1. The majority.
2. The minority.

The vast majority of society comprises the common people or so-called masses, who enjoy a lesser number of welfare options. The other group, which is much smaller, enjoys a large number of material comforts and imagines itself to be the elite of society. Its members consider themselves to be more respectable and privileged than the common people!! No ruler can gain the total consent of society’s minority and majority because, if he sides with the downtrodden, the minority shall be discontented, while, if he works for the benefit of the minority, the masses shall be disgruntled. It is evident that if a comparison is made, working towards strengthening the popular base and earning the consent of the vast majority shall benefit the ruler and his government, while discontent of a small number of people shall not accomplish anything.

Special attributes and roles of the majority and the minority

What special attributes and characteristics does Imam Ali (‘a) ascribe to each of these two groups and what is

the role and position of each one in the administrative setup.

"وَلَيْسَ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الرَّعِيَّةِ، أَثْقَلَ عَلَى الْوَالِي مَؤُونَةً فِي الرَّخَاء، وَأَقَلَّ مَعُونَةً لَهُ فِي الْبَلاَء، وَأَكْرَهَ لِلإِنْصَافِ، وَأَسْأَلَ بِالإِلْحَافِ، وَأَقَلَّ شُكْراً عِنْدَ الإِعْطَاء، وَأَبْطَأَ عُذْراً عِنْدَ الْمَنْعِ، وَأَضْعَفَ صَبْراً عِنْدَ مُلِمَّاتِ الدَّهْرِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْخَاصَّةِ".

«In a state of peace and in normal circumstances, none of your subjects places more burdens on the governor in terms of living expenses; is less helpful in hardships and occurrence of difficulties; more annoyed at execution of justice and equity; more insistent and persistent in its demands; less thankful and appreciative in return for generosity and reward: less forgiving when faced with preventions and refusals (from government); and less resistant and enduring in times of difficulties and emergencies than the elite group.»

Lighter burden, more assistance

The foremost trait of common people and the downtrodden of society is that they always make do with a moderate amount of foodstuff, clothing and other essentials of living. They manage their lives by consuming less; and, therefore, are never a heavy burden on the shoulders of the government and the ruler. In times of war and conflict, the downtrodden become more patient, resilient and contented with each passing moment, and do not spare any effort to help.

Acceptance of justice and equity

One of the lofty humanitarian-Islamic values that an Islamic ruler is obligated by the commandment of the Qur'an is to establish justice among the people and implement it meticulously and observe equality among the strata of society

﴿وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ﴾

"...I have been commanded to be just with you..."[1]

In keeping with their essential nature, the weaker and downtrodden classes are happier and more inclined towards the implementation of justice, while in contrast, the elite are disgusted with its implementation, because they know that justice, equality and equity among the individuals of society means there shall be no room for extravagances and accumulating riches by any means.

Thanks and gratitude for the bounties

In keeping with their intrinsic and humanitarian nature, the downtrodden classes are thankful and are grateful for the ruler's favors to them and never forget the good he has done, whereas, the elite disregard the favors and good done by the ruler, and consider it his duty to oblige them and are never thankful for their status!

Acknowledgement of excuse and lack of insistence

It is the duty of the Islamic ruler and government to provide sustenance and the essential needs of the people

1. *Surat al-Shura: 15*.

under his jurisdiction. At times, because of more conveniences and easier circumstances, the government can perform more of its duties quicker and better and satisfy the people; while at other times, due to unpredictable circumstances and crises the government cannot perform its obligations in a befitting manner. In such instances, the government, which is democratic and considers itself to be of the people, by keeping the people informed, apologizes to them.

On such occasions, the downtrodden accept their apologies and do not insist further that their demands be met, whereas, the wealthy and affluent will not accept such apologies but pursue their demands with greater insistence.

Patience in the face of adversities

Considering that the downtrodden of society are always living in a state of deprivation, poverty and misery, they are more patient and resilient in times of adversity, whereas, the affluent do not display any patience or tolerance. These characteristics compel the ruler to take steps in favor of the deprived and achieve their satisfaction and welfare.

"وَإِنَّمَا عَمُودُ الدِّين، وَجِمَاعُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَالْعُدَّةُ لِلأَعْدَاءِ، الْعَامَّةُ مِنَ الأُمَّةِ، فَلْيَكُنْ صِغْوُكَ لَهُمْ، وَمَيْلُكَ مَعَهُمْ".

«It is the masses of people that are the pillars of religion, the society of Muslims, and the reserve forces against the enemies. Therefore, tune your ears towards them and incline towards them.»

Fighters of liberation

Islam has arrived in order to liberate shackled human beings and free the deprived, the downtrodden and the displaced, and guide the oppressed human beings towards liberation from the oppression and tyranny of colonialists and imperialists. Therefore, it has drawn the wrath of the affluent, the arrogant rich and the global plunderers. In such times, the deprived and the downtrodden are the sole fighters against the domestic and foreign enemy while the rich and the affluent remain hypocritical spectators. This attribute, crystallized in the phrase “وَالْعُدَّةُ لِلأعْدَاءِ” causes the ruler to incline towards the downtrodden and to take steps towards fulfilling their legitimate demands.

Survival of the regime by getting rid of defamers

In Islam, calumny is the worst of vices and the face of the slanderer is the ugliest of faces.

Addressing his loyal companions, the honorable Prophet of Islam (s) describes the face of the slanderer as follows:

”ألا أُنَبِّكُمْ بِشِرارِكُمْ؟ قالُوا: بَلى يا رَسُولَ اللهِ قالَ: الْمَشَّاؤونَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ، الْمُفَرِّقُونَ بَيْنَ الأحِبَّة”.

«Would you like me to inform you of the worst among you? »

They replied: *“Of course, O Prophet of God (s)”.*

He stated: *"Those that engage in slandering and cause rift among friends.* [1]

Imam Baqir ('a) considers Paradise to be forbidden to slanderers and states:

"مُحَرَّمَةٌ الْجَنَّةُ عَلى الْقَتَّاتِينَ الْمَشَّائِينَ بِالْنَمِيمَةِ"

Paradise is forbidden to those who speak untruths and those that engage in slandering. [2]

If we reflect on the statement of the Prophet of God (s), we shall realize the ugliness and indecency of slandering. Whenever a slanderer, observes a weakness in a person, he immediately discusses it with his friend causing a rift to occur among friends and become the cause of hatred and hostility among old time friends. If such a person enters the administrative machinery and has relations with the government officials, he can easily exploit the weak points of others and thereby create a rift between the ruler and the people and make them despise the ruler. Consequently, he can show the ruler to be incompetent because of not having capable manpower. Imam Ali ('a) counsels Malik to get rid of slanderers and detractors to create an atmosphere of trust and security:

" وَلْيَكُنْ أَبْعَدَ رَعِيَّتِكَ مِنْكَ، وَأَشْنَأَهُمْ عِنْدَكَ، أَطْلَبُهُمْ لِمَعَائِبِ النَّاس، فإنَّ في النَّاس عُيُوباً، الْوَالِي أَحَقُّ مَنْ سَتَرَهَا، فَلاَ تَكْشِفَنَّ عَمَّا غَابَ عَنْكَ

1. **Usul al-Kafi**, vol. 2, p. 274.
2. **Usul al-Kafi**, vol. 2, p. 274.

مِنْهَا، فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ تَطْهِيرُ مَا ظَهَرَ لَكَ، وَاللهُ يَحْكُمُ عَلَى مَا غَابَ عَنْكَ، فَاسْتُرِ الْعَوْرَةَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتَ يَسْتُرِ اللهُ مِنْكَ ما تُحِبُّ سَتْرَهُ مِنْ رَعِيَّتِكَ.

أَطْلِقْ عَن النَّاس عُقْدَةَ كُلِّ حِقْد، وَاقْطَعْ عَنْكَ سَبَبَ كُلِّ وِتْر، وَتَغَابَ عَنْ كلِّ مَا لا يَضِحُ لَكَ، وَلاَ تَعْجَلَنَّ إِلَى تَصْدِيقِ سَاع، فَإِنَّ السَّاعِيَ غَاشٌ، وَإِنْ تَشَبَّهَ بِالنَّاصِحِينَ".

«The one among your subjects who should be farthest from you and in your opinion the worst of them, should be the one who is the most critical of the shortcomings of others. This is because all people do have shortcomings, and the ruler is the best person to cover them up. Do not attempt to expose whatever is hidden from you because your duty is to rectify what is manifest to you, while it is Allah Who shall deal with all that is hidden from you. As far as you can, cover up the faults of people. Allah shall cover up those of your faults which you would like to remain hidden from your subjects. Untie the knot of any hatred from the people's heart and sever the factor of alienation from within you. Feign ignorance with regard to all that is not clear to you. Do not hasten to endorse the statement of any backbiter because the backbiter is a traitor although he wears the garb of a well-wishing adviser.»

Keeping secrets and covering shortcomings

In order to demonstrate this Islamic principle he counsels Malik to keep secrets and put a lid on shortcomings of his subjects and people under his jurisdiction. He also

cautions him to desist from being inquisitive and delving into people's hidden affairs.

On the same subject, Imam Sadiq ('a) quotes the Prophet of Islam (s) as stating:

"لا تَطْلُبُوا عَثَراتِ الْمُؤْمِنينَ فَإنَّ مَنْ تَتَبَّعَ عَثَراتِ أخِيهِ تَتَبَّعَ اللهُ عَثَراتِهِ وَمَنْ تَتَبَّعَ اللهُ عَثَراتِهِ يَفْضَحَهُ وَلَوْ فِي جَوْفِ بَيْتِهِ".[1]

«Do not probe the failings of the believers because any person who delves into the failings of his brother, God pursues his failings; and any person whose failings God pursues, He disgraces him even though that person is in the sanctuary of his own home.»

The most dangerous ploy of Imperialism

Spreading immorality and decadence in various societies is the most conspicuous ploy of imperialism and colonialism. In the same way that materialism and communism aim to exterminate religion and faith and promote atheism and ungodliness and, ultimately, demean all values, imperialism and colonialism also aim to alienate nations from the purity of spirit and spirituality by destroying chastity and morality and spreading vice and immorality.

In order to prevent this type of degeneration, Islam strongly combats the public appearance of immorality and decadence and punishes those that engage in vices and immoralities openly in public, or aim to spread immorality and vice in remote areas. Imam Ali ('a)

1. **Usul al-Kafi**, vol. 2, p. 265.

“فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ تَطْهِيرُ مَا ظَهَرَ لَكَ” calls upon Malik to fight the external appearances of immorality and decadence and to check manifest vices and prohibitions, and consequently, prevent the collapse and decadence of the Islamic community.

Untying knots (solving problems)

Yet another duty that becomes clear from Imam Ali’s (‘a) statement**:** “أَطْلِقْ عَنِ النَّاسِ عُقْدَةَ كُلِّ حِقْد” for the governor (and every official of the administration) is that of solving problems and responding to the material and spiritual needs of the people under his authority.

Whenever people are not able to achieve what they want they hold the administration’s executives responsible for their deprivations and problems. When the government is not able to meet all their demands, they nurture hostility against the responsible executives so that the foundations of the regime become unstable. If the ruler is not in a position to fulfill the entire demands of the population under his jurisdiction, he must with an open face, observing decorum and abiding by Islamic ethics, inform the people of the deficiencies and seek their opinion. In a single phrase, he should gain the consent of the people at all cost.

Consultation in Islam

Consultation and counseling are recognized as rational principles by the glorious Qur’an, the great Prophet of Islam (s) and the Immaculate Imams (‘a).

It is aimed at averting despotism and egocentrism as well as gaining access to other opinions. Based on this

premise, the more important and exclusive the subject, the more sensitive and delicate should the consultation be concerning it. Consultation seems to be necessary from two aspects:

1. The diversity of political, cultural, moral, artistic, economic, industrial etc., issues and their fields of specialization has made rational understanding more and more difficult. Thus, it is impossible to understand all of them for a human being, however intelligent he may be and, consequently, there is no other alternative except consultation and counseling with specialists.

2. A human being cannot have more than a single thinking, whereas, if he consults others and takes advantage of their thinking he can obtain a more diverse solution and a more multidimensional result.

The glorious Qur'an calls upon the Prophet of God (s), the only person who is inspired directly from the Source of Revelation, to consult:

﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ لِنتَ لَهُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ كُنتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ ٱلْقَلْبِ لَٱنفَضُّوا۟ مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۖ فَٱعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَٱسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِى ٱلْأَمْرِ ۖ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ﴾

"It was by some mercy of God that you were gentle to them; have you been harsh and hard of heart, they would have scattered from about you; so pardon them, and pray forgiveness for them, and take counsel with them in the

affair; and when you are resolved, put your trust in God; surely, God loves those who put their trust in Him.”[1]

Imam Ali (‘a) states:

”مَنْ أسْتَبَدَّ بِرَأيِهِ هَلَكَ وَمَنْ شَاوَرَ الْرِجَالَ شَارَكَها فِي عُقُولِها”.

«Despotism in opinion and imposition of belief leads a person to destruction; whereas, consulting with people is sharing of minds and taking advantage of their thinking.»

Moral criteria of advisers

Nowadays, all over the world, the help of advisers is sought in every affair and the experiences of others are made use of. In particular, in the administrative machinery, experienced advisers and veteran trainers are employed and the services of skilled, intelligent and experienced individuals are utilized. However, the thing which has been forgotten and not taken into consideration is the ethical yardsticks of the advisers.

To put it more clearly, in non-Islamic governments the best advisers are reckoned to be the most experienced, the most skilled of managers and the most proficient of individuals and there is no other requirement. However, in Islam, in addition to intelligence, diligence and experience, moral yardsticks are recognized as being the criteria of consultation as well.

On this subject, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) states:

1. *Surat al-’Imran: 159.*

"شَاوِرْ فِي أُمُورِكَ مِمّا يَقْتَضِي الْدِّينُ، مَنْ فِيهِ خَمْسُ خِصَالٍ: عَقْلٌ، وَحِلْمٌ، وَتَجْرِبَةٌ، وَنُصْحٌ وَتَقْوى".

«Concerning that which your religion requires, consult with those persons who possess five qualities: Those who are intelligent, patient, experienced, sincere and God-fearing.»[1]

On this subject, according to Imam al-Sadiq ('a):

"وَلا تَشِرْ عَلى مُسْتَبِدٍّ بِرَأْيِهِ، وَلا غَدٍ وَلا عَلى مُتَلَوّنٍ وَلا عَلى لَجُوجٍ".

«Do not consult a despotic and stupid individual and a person who keeps on changing sides, and with obstinate individuals.»[2]

On this subject Imam Ali ('a) states:

"وَلاَ تُدْخِلَنَّ فِي مَشُورَتِكَ بَخِيلاً يَعْدِلُ بِكَ عَنِ الْفَضْلِ، وَيَعِدُكَ الْفَقْرَ، وَلاَ جَبَاناً يُضعِّفُكَ عَنِ الأُمُورِ، وَلاَ حَرِيصاً يُزَيِّنُ لَكَ الشَّرَهَ بِالْجَوْرِ، فَإِنَّ الْبُخْلَ وَالْجُبْنَ وَالْحِرْصَ غَرَائِزُ شَتَّى يَجْمَعُهَا سُوءُ الظَّنِّ بِالله".

«Do not consult a miser because he will prevent you from being magnanimous and scare you of poverty; and do not consult a cowardly and avaricious individual because he will weaken your resolve to perform tasks. Likewise, do not consult a greedy person who makes greed with injustice appear attractive to you. For truly, avarice,

1. **Bihar al-Anwar**, vol. 75, p. 103.
2. **Al Hayat**, vol. 1, p. 196.

cowardice and greed are diverse institutions that all spring up from doubt in God.»

Administrators

Ministers are the highest-ranking officials that regulate the government’s programs. They can guide society towards virtue or immorality, therefore, the righteous stability and glory of the administration is directly connected to their virtue and integrity. Naturally, those persons who were ministers of the oppressors do not deserve to hold the ministerial office of a righteous administration. They are accustomed to the corrupt system and shall commit injustices. When a nation once again sees the collaborators of the former regime back in positions of power, it will say that it is the same old regime working to secure the interests of a particular class! The masses of people shall lose their confidence in the government which shall alienate the people, and in all likelihood, the government shall be faced with an ominous and unpleasant destiny.

"شَرُّ وُزَرَائِكَ مَنْ كَانَ لِلأشْرَارِ قَبْلَكَ وَزِيراً، وَمَنْ شَرِكَهُمْ فِي الآثَامِ، فَلاَ يَكُونَنَّ لَكَ بِطَانَةً، فَإِنَّهُمْ أَعْوَانُ الأَثَمَةِ، وَإِخْوَانُ الظَّلَمَةِ، وَأَنْتَ وَاجِدٌ مِنْهُمْ خَيْرَ الْخَلَفِ مِمَّنْ لَهُ مِثْلُ آرَائِهِمْ وَنَفَاذِهِمْ، وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ آصَارِهِمْ وَأَوْزَارِهِمْ وَآثَامِهِمْ، مِمَّنْ لَمْ يُعَاوِنْ ظَالِماً عَلَى ظُلْمِهِ، وَلاَ آثِماً عَلَى إِثْمِهِ".

«The worst of your viziers are those that were the viziers of the mischievous rulers before you and were their partners in crime and companions in mischief. Thus, these

individuals must not be your confidants because they were collaborators with wrongdoers and brethren of tyrants, whereas, you have the best successors at your disposal. They are persons who, in terms of thinking and social influence, are not inferior to them and, in addition, are not carrying the burden of the sins of the tyrants on their shoulders, and have neither colluded with the tyrants in their tyranny nor are partners in their crime.»

Observe how Imam Ali (‘a) recommends rejection of collaborators with the former regime to his governor; and considering it possible that he would be faced with a shortage of specialist manpower, guides Malik towards genuine, revolutionary, and skilled manpower in society. He tells him not to be afraid of purging and revitalizing Islamic society with this thinking because the decadent manpower shall easily be replaced with sound and upright manpower.

Superiority of the ‘Hezbullah’ (Party of God) forces

Sequel to the above, His Holiness states the advantages and superiority of the Hezbullah manpower in comparison to the manpower of the tyrannical regime as follows:

"أُولئِكَ أَخَفُّ عَلَيْكَ مَؤُونَةً، وَأَحْسَنُ لَكَ مَعُونَةً، وَأَحْنَى عَلَيْكَ عَطْفاً، وَأَقَلُّ لِغَيْرِكَ إِلْفاً، فَاتَّخِذْ أُولئِكَ خَاصَّةً لِخَلَوَاتِكَ وَحَفَلاَتِكَ ".

«The Hezbullah forces are less expensive on your budget, they cooperate with you better, they are more affectionate towards you, and their liking for strangers is less. Therefore, bring them into your inner circle and make them your confidants.»

The cream of the crop

Imam Ali’s (‘a) pointed out that the Hezbollah manpower needs to be sifted by means of specific measures and criteria and each one assimilated or deleted to the extent of his commitment and devotion. In this way the ground for misplaced growth of the undeserving and unqualified and, estrangement of the competent and qualified is not furnished.

”ثُمَّ لْيَكُنْ آثَرُهُمْ عِنْدَكَ أَقْوَلَهُمْ بِمُرِّ الْحَقِّ لَكَ، وأَقَلَّهُمْ مُسَاعَدَةً فِيما يَكُونُ مِنْكَ مِمَّا كَرِهَ اللهُ لأَوْلِيَائِهِ، وَاقِعاً ذلِكَ مِنْ هَوَاكَ حَيْثُ وَقَعَ.

وَالْصَقْ بِأَهْلِ الْوَرَعِ وَالصِّدْقِ، ثُمَّ رُضْهُمْ عَلَى أَلا يُطْرُوكَ وَلاَ يُبَجِّحُوكَ بِبَاطِلٍ لَمْ تَفْعَلْهُ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الإِطْرَاءِ تُحْدِثُ الزَّهْوَ، وَتُدْنِي مِنَ الْعِزَّةِ ”.

«Give preference to individuals who are more apt to speak the truth and are least supportive of those of your actions that God does not approve of in His friends, whether you like it or not. Associate yourself with God-fearing, sincere and honest people, and educate them in such a way that they neither praise you excessively, nor flatter you for actions that you have not performed, because excessive praise produces vanity and conceit in a person.»

If these principles are applied, will hypocrites, liars, sycophants and ‘yes-men’ get their hands on key positions while the pious and devoted forces become alienated? The answer is certainly in the negative.

The consent of God is the basis of evaluation and not appeasement of the ruler and the viceroy, therefore, the

employee who speaks out the truth, however bitter and distasteful it be, shall be trustworthy. In this system the forthright, honest and morally upright employee advances because it is the duty of the ruler to seek the morally upright and get close to the honest and forthright individuals.

Correct management in Islamic system

Justice means placing everything in its proper place. "الْعَدْلُ وَضْعُ الشَيءِ فِي مَحَلِّهِ" The religion of Islam is founded on justice. On the basis of this Islamic criterion correct management shall firstly, not measure both the loyal and disloyal employees with the same yardstick; rather, punish the disloyal and reward the loyal. Secondly, the criteria of rewarding individuals should solely depend upon their performance.

If the management does not reward the loyal individuals, but treats them like the disloyal ones, then individuals get the feeling that their efforts have been wasted. The motive to work better is crippled and the system inclines toward lethargy and decline. If the rewards are unfair, discriminatory and based on likes and dislikes of managers, the employees shall lose confidence in the manager and all their sincerity and devotion as well.

"وَلاَ يَكُونَنَّ الْـمُحْسِنُ وَالْمُسِيءُ عِنْدَكَ بِمَنْزِلَة سَوَاء، فَإِنَّ فِي ذلِكَ تَزْهِيداً لأَهْلِ الإِحْسَانِ فِي الإِحْسَانِ، تَدْرِيباً لأَهْلِ الإِسَاءَةِ عَلَى الإِسَاءَةِ، وَأَلْزِمْ كُلاً مِنْهُمْ مَا أَلْزَمَ نَفْسَهُ".

«The good performers and the bad performers should not be treated alike by you, for this will become the most

powerful factor of indifference in the good performers, while rewarding the bad performers for their bad performance. Reward each of them according to their performance on the job.»

Trust in the people

Corrupt regimes are founded on the basis of cynicism, distrust and suspicion of the people. The ruler sees himself as a distinct and superior entity, and considers them to be hostile and inimical towards his regime. With this perception, because of the fears that he always has of the people, he seeks to get information (through various organizations) of opponents and crackdown on them, as well as find an excuse to vent his frustrations and shortcomings on a group of innocent people, and extend his rule by means of intimidating and terrorizing the people.

In contrast, Islamic rule is founded on the pillars of trust and goodwill towards the people. In Islamic rule, the ruler views the people under his authority as friendly, sympathetic, and cooperative, and does not consider himself to be distinct from the people and the people distinct from him. He regards popular movements to be aimed at better administration by the government, and does not see any reason to conduct investigations, always aiming to seek the consent of the people under his authority.

"وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ بِأَدْعَى إِلَى حُسْنِ ظَنِّ وَالِ بِرَعِيَّتِهِ مِنْ إِحْسَانِهِ إِلَيْهِمْ، وَتَخْفِيفِهِ الْمَؤُونَاتِ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَتَرْكِ اسْتِكْرَاهِهِ إِيَّاهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَيْسَ

لهُ قِبَلَهُمْ، فَلْيَكُنْ مِنْكَ فِي ذلِكَ أَمْرٌ يَجْتَمِعُ لَكَ بِهِ حُسْنُ الظَّنِّ بِرَعِيَّتِكَ، فَإِنَّ حُسْنَ الظَّنِّ يَقْطَعُ عَنْكَ نَصَباً طَوِيلاً، وَإِنَّ أَحَقَّ مَنْ حَسُنَ ظَنُّكَ بِهِ لَمَنْ حَسُنَ بَلاَؤُكَ عِنْدَهُ، وَإِنَّ أَحَقَّ مَنْ سَاءَ ظَنُّكَ بِهِ لَمَنْ سَاءَ بَلاَؤُكَ عِنْدَهُ".

«Know that no set of factors work better for the governor in gaining the loyalty of the subjects than doing favors to them, lessening the burden of their living, and not forcing them to perform a task which they are not obliged to perform. Thus, it is necessary that you devise a plan by which you gain the trust of the people, for this trust will relieve you of a lot of suffering. The individual most deserving of your trust is the one who considers these policies to be good; while the person most deserving of your distrust is the one who regards them to be bad.»

To show that trust in the people and goodwill towards them is not hypothetical, Imam Ali (‘a) presents certain ways to verify this claim:

1. Create good will
2. Reduce expenditures
3. Avoid imposing unnecessary tasks

In subsequent chapters, we shall discuss each of the three ways and thus avoid repetition of what shall be dealt with later.

Lawful and unlawful traditions

In Islam, traditions and norms customary among the people are divided in to two groups:

1. Lawful traditions
2. Unlawful traditions

Traditions that are contrary to Islamic principles, criteria and standards are called 'unlawful' traditions. It is the duty of the ruler to smash the unlawful traditions and combat them. At the beginning of the prophetic mission of the Prophet of God (s), idol-worship appeared as a popular tradition and because it was openly opposed to the principles of Islam, with the Qur'anic slogan of "قُولوا لا إله إلا الله تفحلوا" His Holiness began smashing the idols and opposed all kinds of idolatry until martyrdom.

In contrast, traditions that are not opposed to the principles of Islam are called 'lawful traditions' and the duty of the Islamic ruler not to break them; rather, his duty is to preserve them and guide society towards positive and beneficial customs and rituals.

The Nowruz Feast (Iranian New Year) was one of the prevailing traditions long before the advent of Islam and it is prevalent and popular even in today's Islamic Iran. On this day our people wear new clothes and visit each other. This tradition is not opposed to Islam and Islamic regulations, and deepens ties of kinship, friendship and togetherness. Here, the duty of the ruler is not to smash it; rather, preserve and give purpose to this longstanding tradition (and any kind of other lawful method):

"وَلاَ تَنْقُضْ سُنَّةً صَالِحَةً عَمِلَ بِهَا صُدُورُ هذِهِ الأُمَّةِ، وَاجْتَمَعتْ بِهَا الأَلْفَةُ، وَصَلَحَتْ عَلَيْهَا الرَّعِيَّةُ، لاَ تُحْدِثَنَّ سُنَّةً تَضُرُّ بِشَيء مِنْ مَاضِي تِلْكَ السُّنَن، فَيَكُونَ الأَجْرُ بِمَنْ سَنَّهَا، وَالْوِزْرُ عَلَيْكَ بِمَا نَقَضْتَ مِنْهَا".

«Do not discontinue any good tradition that the distinguished men of the nation practice due to which affinity and solidarity is established (among the people) and by means of it the affairs of the nation are reformed! Do not invent a new method that harms any of the past traditions. (Should you engage in breaking such traditions) the reward shall be given to the founder of the traditions and the sin shall be yours for breaking them.»

The malady of bureaucrats and the way of preventing it

Pragmatism in its pure sense is the biggest malady of administrators and becomes a more serious threat when they acquire fame and social credibility. They have an intense obsession for social recognition which prevents them from having a correct understanding of societal issues and develop an indifference towards devotional and personal matters.

The way to prevent this malady is by associating with the erudite scholars of Islam and learning from the experiences of the knowledgeable:

" وَأَكْثِرْ مُدَارَسَةَ الْعُلَمَاءِ، وَمُنَاقَثَةَ الْحُكَمَاءِ، فِي تَثْبِيتِ مَا صَلَحَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرُ بِلاَدِكَ، وَإِقَامَةِ مَا اسْتَقَامَ بِهِ النَّاسُ قَبْلَكَ"

«Engage in much conversation with the erudite scholars and have profound discussions with the men of wisdom and specialists in the field! These conversations and discussions should revolve round issues that improve the situation of your country and all that which strengthens the hands of people before you.»

Being religious or being a specialist?

Deliberation on the words of Imam Ali (‘a) acquaints scholars with other issues as well. Nowadays, in our Islamic society, a number of people promote specialization and consider being a specialist as the yardstick of employment; while some others give primacy to the criteria of being religious.

By stating the phrase "وَأَكْثِرْ مُدَارَسَةَ الْعُلَمَاءِ" Imam Ali (‘a) calls upon Malik to associate with the erudite Islamic scholars and theologians, and through the phrase "وَمُنَاقَثَةَ الْحُكَمَاءِ " calls upon his administrators and officials to employ specialists and experienced individuals introducing the concept of ‘religion combined with specialization’ as the yardstick of selection and appointment of individuals to key state postings.

Common Destiny of Humans in Community

From the Nahj al-Balaghah’s point of view, various professions of society emerge from a single body and have a common destiny. In order to discuss this we need to present certain preliminaries:

Definition of society

Thus society is an association of humans that have been bonded together by specific systems, traditions, customs and laws. Society is a grouping of individuals which ceases to exist if the individuals are not present in it.

Independence of Society

Does society minus individuals have a concrete existence or conversely, does not exist minus individuals?

For the first time among Islamic philosophers, Ibn Khaldun says in the introduction of his historical book, *Al-'Ibar*: "Every society goes through a period of infancy, childhood, adolescence, old age and degeneration and inevitably, it dies." He even gives an estimate of the approximate lifetime of any society.

It is clear that when society is comprised of individuals who interact with one another and share a common destiny, they are inevitably influenced by each other's actions. If the majority in society are evil, then even the righteous minority is not unaffected by their ill-fated destiny; whereas if the majority are righteous, the minority benefits from the effects of their goodness and similarly, the fate of each one of the classes affects the other.

Based on this premise, Imam Ali ('a) calls upon Malik to carry out a thorough understanding of the nation's classes and pay attention to the health of each class.

"وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ الرَّعِيَّةَ طَبَقَاتٌ لاَ يَصْلُحُ بَعْضُهَا إلا بِبَعْض، وَلاَ غِنَى بِبَعْضِهَا عَنْ بَعْض: فَمِنْهَا جُنُودُ الله،مِنْهَا كُتَّابُ الْعَامَّةِ وَالْخَاصَّةِ، وَمِنْهَا قُضَاةُ الْعَدْلِ، وَمِنهَا عُمَّالُ الإنْصَافِ وَالرِّفْقِ، وَمِنْهَا أَهْلُ الْجِزْيَةِ وَالْخَرَاجِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ وَمُسْلِمَةِ النَّاس، وَمِنْهَا التُّجَّارُ وَأَهْلُ الصِّنَاعَاتِ، وَمِنهَا الطَّبَقَةُ السُّفْلَى مِنْ ذَوِي الْحَاجَةِ وَالْمَسْكَنَةِ، وَكُلٌّ قَدْ سَمَّى اللهُ سَهْمَهُ، وَوَضَعَ عَلَى حَدِّهِ وَفَرِيضَتِهِ فِي كِتَابِهِ أَوْ سُنَّةِ نَبِيِّهِ ﷺ عَهْداً مِنْهُ عِنْدَنَا مَحْفُوظاً".

«Know that people are divided into classes. The work of any group is not reformed except with the help of the

other, nor is any group self-sufficient without the other. These classes are: the army of God, the public and private scribes, dispensers of justice, those that carry out law and order, those that pay ‘Jizyah’ head tax and levies – including non-Muslims, as well as Muslims living under protection of the Islamic government–traders, industrialists, and the lower strata - the destitute and needy. God has fixed a share for each of the aforesaid classes and has defined their limits, either in the Book of God or the ‘Sunnah’ of the Prophet of God (s), and has placed them in a suitable station which is preserved with us in the form of a covenant.»

Every strata of society is dependent on the other strata

Imam Ali (‘a) says that no class is self-sufficient, so that if a class wishes to preserve its existence, it needs to strive to preserve the existence of the other as well and should not believe that its existence is tied to the annihilation of the other. There is no security in a society without the armed forces, and when there is no security, trade and agriculture are disrupted. With the halt in business and decline in agriculture there are no taxes to cover the expenditures of the armed forces and procurement of military hardware. The job of the administrators and judges is constant regulation of various societal activities. Society will be faced with sedition and anarchy if not supervised meticulously.

The lower strata of society are extremely important for the survival of the other strata and if a class loses its

existence and not be able to continue its activities, it will affect the other strata as well.

"فَالْجُنُودُ، بِإِذْنِ الله، حُصُونُ الرَّعِيَّةِ، وَزَيْنُ الْوُلاَةِ، وعِزُّ الدِّين، وَسُبُلُ الأَمْن، وَلَيْسَ تَقُومُ الرَّعِيَّةُ إلا بِهِمْ. ثُمَّ لاَ قِوَامَ لِلْجُنُودِ إلا بِمَا يُخْرِجُ اللهُ لَهُمْ مِنَ الْخَرَاجِ الَّذِي يَقْوَوْنَ بِهِ فِي جِهَادِ عَدُوِهِمْ، وَيَعْتَمِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِيما أصْلَحهُمْ، وَيَكُونُ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حَاجَتِهِمْ. ثُمَّ لا قِوَامَ لِهذَيْن الصِّنْفَيْن إلا بِالصِّنْفِ الثَّالِثِ مِنَ الْقُضَاةِ وَالْعُمَّالِ وَالْكُتَّابِ، لِمَا يُحْكِمُونَ مِنَ الْمَعَاقِدِ، وَيَجْمَعُونَ مِنْ الْمَنَافِعِ، وَيُؤْتَمَنُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَوَاصِّ الأُمُورِ وَعَوَامِّهَا. وَلا قِوَامَ لَهُمْ جَمِيعاً إلا بِالتُّجَّارِ وَذَوِي الصِّنَاعَاتِ، فِيما يَجْتَمِعُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ مَرَافِقِهِمْ، وَيُقِيمُونَهُ مِنْ أَسْوَاقِهِمْ، وَيَكْفُونَهُمْ مِنَ التَّرَفُّقِ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ممّا لاَ يَبْلُغُهُ رِفْقُ غَيْرِهِمْ. ثُمَّ الطَّبَقَةُ السُّفْلَى مِنْ أَهْلِ الْحَاجَةِ وَالْمَسْكَنَةِ الَّذِينَ يَحِقُّ رِفْدُهُمْ وَمَعُونَتُهُمْ".

«By the Will of the Creator, the army is the fortress of the subjects, the ornament of the ruler, the honor of religion and the means of security. The people's wellbeing is not possible except by means of the Army of Allah. On the one hand it is impossible to ensure the army's dependability, except by means of the taxes (tributes) that God removes from the wealth of the masses of people. This is because the army acquires its strength for Jihad with the enemy by means of the taxes (tributes) and relies on them for improvement of its capabilities, as well as provide for its needs. These two groups do not get organized except with the third group which comprises the magistrates, the government executives and the bureaucrats, because this

group enhances the contracts and transactions, collects taxes and is trusted in recording both personal and public affairs.

All these groups cannot perpetuate without the traders, professionals, and industrialists, because they come together to make a profit and secure the needs of other classes with their hard work, which others are not capable of doing.

The strata of the needy and destitute deserve to benefit from the help and cooperation of others.»

Separation of powers and division of labor on the basis of merit

The Islamic ruler must firstly, establish the station of power and secondly, divide the tasks on the basis of individual merit, and competency and consequently, prevent personal relations from replacing criteria. This responsibility is the most critical, most difficult and most risky, and the ruler shall not be able to carry out this heavy divine duty except with constant effort and the assistance of Almighty God.

"وَفِي الله لِكُلّ سَعَةٌ، وَلِكُلّ عَلَى الْوَالِي حَقٌ بِقَدْرِ مَا يُصْلِحُهُ، لَيْسَ يَخْرُجُ الْوَالِي مِنْ حَقِيقَةِ مَا أَلْزَمَهُ اللهُ مِنْ ذلِكَ إلا بِالاْهْتِمام وَالاسْتِعَانَةِ بِالله، وَتَوْطِين نَفْسِهِ عَلَى لُزُومِ الْحَقِّ، وَالصَّبْر عَلَيْهِ فِيما خَفَّ عَلَيْهِ أَوْ ثَقُلَ".

«For all these groups there is a relief from God; and each of them has a right on the ruler to the extent required for

his welfare. In relation to carrying out the duties placed on him by God, the ruler cannot succeed except through effort, seeking succor from God, grooming himself to adhere to the truth, as well as, being patient and steadfast in the face of a light or heavy burden.»

Unique Attributes of the commanders of Islam's army

The soldiers, who march with the spirit of martyrdom in the Path of God and establish the sovereignty of the Qur'an and the vivifying canons of Islam, must all be imbued with Islamic culture and ethics. They should be armed with traits that are identified with Islam; such as faith, chastity, abstinence, and selflessness in the Path of God, as well as other attributes of a righteous believer. As for the commanders of the army of Islam, more complex attributes have been taken into consideration; and it is not within reach of each and every one to be appointed as a commander of an armed division of an Islamic state.

In addition to faith, fear of God, courage, self-sacrifice, intelligence, sagacity and power of leadership, a commander of the army of Islam also needs to possess a lofty spirit, dignity, composure, patience, spiritual calm, moral equilibrium, appropriate vehemence and firmness, and timely leniency and tolerance, so that he does not endanger the lives of the warriors of Islam with his folly, frivolity, obstinacy, rigidity and aggression, and misuses his power and resorts to illogical and ambitious slaying campaigns.

Imam Ali’s (‘a) Document of Instruction clearly describes a competent commander of the army of Islam as possessing the following attributes and qualities:

1. Obedience and sincere mutual cooperation in implementing Almighty God’s commandments, and instructions of the Prophet of Islam (s), the plenipotentiary ruler, the Imam and leader of Islam.
2. Tolerance and spiritual composure
3. Chastity, devotion, and fear of God
4. A brilliant track record
5. Steadfastness in the face of difficulties and adversities
6. Forbearance and self-control, and power to check sudden and impulsive anger and fury,
7. Spirit of forgiveness for repentant and remorseful wrongdoers,
8. Courage on the battlefield, as well as in the sphere of living,
9. Generosity and munificence,
10. Lofty vision that considers anything ungodly to be irrelevant,
11. Wisdom, patience, as well as acute intelligence and decisiveness
12. Mercy and sympathy towards the downtrodden and the weaker strata of society, and severity towards the rich and powerful.

”فَوَلِّ مِنْ جُنُودِكَ أَنْصَحَهُمْ فِي نَفْسِكَ لله وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِإِمَامِكَ، وَأَنْقَاهُمْ جَيْباً، وَأَفْضَلَهُمْ حِلْماً مِمَّنْ يُبْطِىءُ عَنِ الْغَضَبِ، وَيَسْتَرِيحُ إِلَى الْعُذْرِ،

وَيَرْأَفُ بِالضُّعَفَاء، وَيَنْبُو عَلَى الأَقْوِيَاء، وَمِمَّنْ لاَ يُثِيرُهُ الْعُنْفُ، وَلاَ يَقْعُدُ بِهِ الضَّعْفُ. ثُمَّ الْصَقْ بَذَوِي الْمُرُوءَاتِ وَالأَحْسَابِ، وَأَهْلِ الْبُيُوتَاتِ الصَّالِحَةِ، وَالسَّوَابِقِ الْحَسَنَةِ، ثُمَّ أَهْلِ النَّجْدَةِ وَالشَّجَاعَةِ، وَالسَّخَاءِ وَالسَّمَاحَةِ، فَإِنَّهُمْ جِمَاعٌ مِنَ الْكَرَمِ، وَشُعَبٌ مِنَ الْعُرْفِ".

«From among your soldiers appoint a commander who in your view is more gracious towards God Almighty, the Prophet of Islam (s) and your Imam, and is purer of heart and more intelligent than all. They should be slow to anger; more forgiving and compassionate towards the downtrodden, while tough with the powerful; they should not be overwhelmed by difficulties.

Thereafter, associate with considerate people and the virtuous as well as with individuals of character and pedigree as well as righteous families[1] *and then with the courageous, generous and benevolent individuals, for*

1. In the days of Imam Ali (‘a) Arab society lacked academies to train suitable persons for appointment as commanders of the army. However, in that same period, there were noble and well-bred families who would educate and train their children in exclusive traditions and customs. In line with this tutoring, the children of these families would learn warfare techniques and rules of combat. With the courage and gallantry they would display on the battlefield, they would manage to win over the hearts of the masses of people. This itself would prepare the groundwork for their subsequent appointment as military commanders and gain the acceptance of the people. Imam Ali (‘a) calls upon Malik to appoint elements from these families.

they are the repositories of beneficence and sources of goodness.»

Leader’s Duties in relation to the commanders of the army of Islam

Imam Ali (‘a) never looked at a problem from one aspect. The leader also had certain duties vis-à-vis the commanders of the army of which the most important are:

1. Show compassion like that shown by parents to children
2. Delegate powers to the commanders without withholding anything that enhances their power, and never consider anything that strengthens them to be difficult and impracticable.
3. Be constantly aware of the condition of the commanders and the problems of their day-to-day living. The leader must be kind and pleasant towards them and not consider this issue to be unimportant because, when small and big favors are done to men in uniform and commanders of the army, they develop a feeling of goodwill towards him, and this causes them to cooperate fully with him and be gracious and strive with their heart and soul to be at his service.
4. Not consider his duty to be over once he has done some big favors to his commanders and then desist from doing small favors to them. Often, jobs that are apparently trivial, and favors that seem small, are extremely effective in winning over the hearts of individuals.

Thus in the same way that they expect their leader to do big favors and are in need of them, commanders are pleased with his small and subtle favors as well, and it is for the leader to carry out these favors at the right moment. On this subject His Holiness states:

"ثُمَّ تَفَقَّدْ مِنْ أُمُورِهِمْ مَا يَتَفَقَّدُهُ الْوَالِدَانِ مِنْ وَلَدِهِمَا، وَلاَ يَتَفَاقَمَنَّ فِي نَفْسِكَ شَيْءٌ قَوَّيْتَهُمْ بِهِ، وَلاَ تَحْقِرَنَّ لُطْفاً تَعَاهَدْتَهُمْ بِهِ وَإِنْ قَلَّ، فَإِنَّهُ دَاعِيَةٌ لَهُمْ إِلَى بَذْلِ النَّصِيحَةِ لَكَ، وَحُسْنِ الظَّنِّ بِكَ. وَلاَ تَدَعْ تَفَقُّدَ لَطِيفِ أُمُورِهِمُ اتِّكَالاً عَلَى جَسِيمِهَا، فَإِنَّ لِلْيَسِيرِ مِنْ لُطْفِكَ مَوْضِعاً يَنْتَفِعُونَ بِهِ، وَلِلْجَسِيمِ مَوْقِعاً لاَ يَسْتَغْنُونَ عَنْهُ".

«Work hard to please the men in the military in the same way that parents strive to appease their children. Do not consider anything that you spend in order to strengthen their position to be big, nor perceive any favor – however small – to be trivial, because it is these small favors that makes them your well-wishers and causes them to show goodwill towards you. Never neglect to attend to the trivial needs of the army in order to grant big favors to them, because it is these small favors that have their own special place from which they benefit; whilst the big favors - which they do not consider themselves to be needless of-have their own position as well.»

Commanders have, with all their heart and soul accepted great responsibilities and are ready to give their lives. With their self-sacrifice and selflessness, they have stepped on to a path that always involves them in combat and warfare, and death and martyrdom awaits them at every step. These outstanding characteristics and earnest

responsibilities can indeed create certain expectations and anticipations from the leader in their heart and soul. To fulfill them places a difficult and delicate responsibility on the leader’s shoulders. In fact, in this instance, a true leader is obligated to look at the issue with care, magnanimity, as well as with a strong understanding and profound thinking, and exercise utmost caution. It is not only material issues and superficial needs that are of consideration; rather, deep emotions, subtle spirits as well as spiritual and psychological needs are involved as well, and disregarding them can lead to distress and indifference and, occasionally, even disaster. For this reason Imam Ali (‘a) places the leader in a role similar to that of parents for the soldiers and commanders.

Most important qualities of outstanding and supreme commanders

Individuals that possess more conspicuous qualities are selected as commanders; among them are some persons that possess extremely outstanding qualities. These important qualities result in a limited number of commanders who get particularly close to the leader and form his inner circle and enjoy personal, sincere and close contacts with him. Commanders in possession of such qualities and attributes are in fact considered to be the most outstanding and supreme commanders of the army of Islam. In other words, they are the persons with whom the leader or ruler consults his most important combat; with whom he discusses the most confidential military secrets; proposes the most accurate and decisive war plans in their presence and after consulting and coordinating with them, finally hands over the keys of battle and Jihad

to them, and entrusts the responsibility of the army of Islam with peace of mind and assurance.

The most important attributes of these outstanding commanders according to Imam Ali (‘a) are:

1. They must be on the same level as the rest of the army personnel in the style of living, welfare facilities, and home essentials, so that the lower ranked army personnel regard them as being sympathetic to them because they understand their problems and difficulties of living.

2. With care and sympathy and well-thought out plans, they should strive to meet their needs, so that when the army goes to battle with the enemy, they are confident that their spouses and children are being well looked after in terms of both their material and spiritual needs. Without any anxiety, they will concentrate solely and solely on the war with the enemy and their Divine objective.

3. Be generous to the military personnel and, give the soldiers unhesitatingly from the budget they have at their disposal. It is natural that when a combatant is secure in terms of sustenance and not worried about his own needs, he enters the battlefield with full concentration, high morale, sincerity and single-mindedness of purpose, and thinks solely of his lofty Divine objective.

In Islamic culture the palpable realities of life have not been overlooked. Imam Ali (‘a) clearly mentions that whenever the material and subsistence needs of the warriors and commanders of the army are not met satisfactorily, they will not be able to enter the battlefield

with full concentration, defeat the enemy, and emerge victorious.

"وَلْيَكُنْ آثَرُ رُؤوس جُنْدِكَ عِنْدَكَ مَنْ وَاسَاهُمْ فِي مَعُونَتِهِ، وَأَفْضَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ جِدَتِهِ بِمَا يَسَعُهُمْ يَسَعُ مَنْ وَرَاءَهُمْ مِنْ خُلُوفِ أَهْلِيهِمْ، حَتَّى يَكُونَ هَمُّهُمْ هَمّاً وَاحِداً فِي جِهَادِ الْعَدُوِّ، فَإِنَّ عَطْفَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ يَعْطِفُ قُلُوبَهُمْ عَلَيْكَ".

«The most distinguished commanders of the army, in your eyes, should be those who grant assistance to the soldiers generously and favor them by giving away from their own provisions in a way that they and their families can manage their households, so that their sole aim is fighting the enemy. This is because your kindness to them directs their hearts towards you.»

Stability of Government

The objective of the Prophet of Islam (s) was to establish justice and uphold equality in human society. Based on this premise, Islam – as commanded by the Qur'an – calls upon the government to implement social justice and also advises individuals to be just with one another:

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّٰمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ ٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ وَٱلْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَٱللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُواْ ٱلْهَوَىٰٓ أَن تَعْدِلُواْ﴾

"O ye, who believe, stand firmly with justice, witnesses for God's sake, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kindred, be you rich or poor, for God is closer (than you) to them both; Therefore, follow not your inclinations, lest ye deviate, (from the truth) and if ye swerve (from the truth) or turn aside, then verily, God is All-Aware of what ye do."[1]

With this Qur'anic perception, Imam Ali ('a) also believes that if a government makes justice and equality its slogan and succeeds in implementing it, such a government deserves to endure and is capable of stability, otherwise, a government whose aim is tyranny, exploitation, and abuse, is a fleeting one and susceptible to decline. Naturally a people who live under the banner of the government of truth always hope for its survival and increased sovereignty, whereas people who are living under the yoke of a government of injustice always desire its downfall and look forward to getting rid of the instruments of injustice and tyranny.

"وَإِنَّ أَفْضَلَ قُرَّةِ عَيْنِ الْوُلاَةِ اسْتِقَامَةُ الْعَدْلِ فِي الْبِلاَدِ، وَظُهُورُ مَوَدَّةِ الرَّعِيَّةِ، وَإِنَّهُ لا تَظْهَرُ مَوَدَّتُهُمْ إِلا بَسَلاَمَةِ صُدُورِهِمْ، وَلاَ تَصِحُّ نَصِيحَتُهُمْ إِلا بِحِيطَتِهِمْ عَلَى وُلاَةِ أُمُورِهِمْ، وَقِلَّةِ اسْتِثْقَالِ دُوَلِهِمْ، وَتَرْكِ اسْتِبْطَاءِ انْقِطَاعِ مُدَّتِهِمْ. فَافْسَحْ فِي آمَالِهِمْ".

«The most cherished action of the rulers is the establishment of justice throughout the land and the outpouring of the subjects' love for them. Undoubtedly,

1. *Surat al-Nisa': 134.*

the people’s friendship for the rulers does not show itself except when their hearts are clean vis-à-vis the rulers; their good wishes shall be proper only when they rally round their rulers of their own accord; and, their government does not become a burden on them and the prolongation of the period of its rule does not become disagreeable to them. Therefore, give leeway to their aspirations.»

Encouragement: Motivation for greater effort

In Islamic culture, certain conditions and characteristics are necessary, which have been determined meticulously for each individual and strata of society. For instance, if a ruler demands self-sacrifice and selflessness from the warriors of Islam, he needs to have a fatherly and affectionate attitude towards them. If he wishes to be popular, he must secure their material needs; while, if he expects them to be conscientious and virtuous, he must be just and fair in his attitude towards them.

Meanwhile, one of the greatest and most splendid of Imam Ali’s (‘a) guidelines concerning the reciprocal duties of the leader and the people as well as that of the commander and the ordinary soldier is that the leaders and military commanders must assiduously and carefully consider all dimensions of their subordinates’ lives and to pay due attention to all types of their needs–including both material and spiritual. It means that if a leader undertakes to meet the spiritual needs of his people alone and in return keeps them hungry and impoverished, he shall not succeed in his job. Likewise, if he attends only to their material welfare but disregards spiritual and psychic issues, again he shall not gain any success.

One of the most important spiritual and psychic needs of the combatants which should never be overlooked by the ruler and commander is their need to be encouraged and appreciated by the ruler and leader. The zealous warriors, who step onto the battlefield in a spirit of self-sacrifice and selflessness and welcome death and martyrdom, need to be encouraged by the commanders and constantly appreciated. The ruler and the commanders should not be indifferent and inattentive towards them so that they do not feel discouraged.

These expressions of gratitude cause even the slack, lethargic and procrastinating individuals to come to their senses and, like their sacrificing warrior counterparts, they, too, enter the battlefield with zeal and are encouraged to sacrifice their lives in the path of their supreme aspirations.

"وَوَاصِلْ فِي حُسْنِ الثَّنَاءِ عَلَيْهِمْ، وَتَعْدِيدِ مَا أَبْلى ذَوُو الْبَلاَءِ مِنْهُمْ، فَإِنَّ كَثْرَةَ الذِّكْرِ لِحُسْنِ أَفْعَالِهِمْ تَهُزُّ الشُّجَاعَ، وَتُحَرِّضُ النَّاكِلَ، إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ".

«Always encourage the soldiers and point out the important tasks they have accomplished! Recalling the good deeds of the brave ones sways the army to greater action and encourages those that are lethargic to work harder, God willing.»

Malady of discrimination

A good ruler should know that no disease works like discrimination and injustice between individuals, in causing despair and indifference among the people and lead to disintegration of society. Therefore, in the same

way that he should not neglect to encourage the well-deserving individuals, a good ruler must also desist from excessive and extravagant encouragement of individuals, which also becomes a sign of discrimination and injustice.

Based on this premise, the ruler has a duty to encourage and reward individuals (especially of the armed forces) by means of an accurate assessment and on the basis of the effort and merit of individuals, and to refrain from involving parameters such as position and station, seniority and age, fame and anonymity, wealth and poverty etc…It is with this view that Imam Ali ('a) states:

"ثُمَّ اعْرِفْ لِكُلِّ امْرِىء مِنْهُمْ مَا أَبْلى، وَلاَ تَضُمَّنَّ بَلاَءَ امْرِىء إِلَى غَيْرِهِ، وَلاَ تُقَصِّرَنَّ بِهِ دُونَ غَايَةِ بَلاَئِهِ، وَلاَ يَدْعُوَنَّكَ شَرَفُ امْرِىء إِلَى أَنْ تُعْظِمَ مِنْ بَلاَئِهِ مَا كَانَ صَغِيراً، وَلاَ ضَعَةُ امْرِىء إِلَى أَنْ تَسْتَصْغِرَ مِنْ بَلاَئِهِ مَا كَانَ عَظِيما".

«Express appreciation for the performance of any person for any job he has performed; and neither give credit to a person for the hard work and efforts of another, nor lessen the true worth of his services. The high status of an individual should not make you to upgrade the size of the task he has accomplished, nor the lower status of a person make you downsize the big service he has rendered.»

Station of the Qur'an and Sunnah in Islamic society

The Qur'an and Sunnah are regarded as the source of all societal, political, economic, etc. , issues. In times of

differences, diversity of opinions, and ambiguity of truth from falsehood, they are the yardstick of truth and assessment of right from wrong. In order to clarify the place of the Qur'an and Sunnah in Islamic society, we inevitably need to mention certain rudiments:

Definition of 'Sunnah'

The traditional practices and statements of the Prophet of Islam (s) and the Immaculate Imams ('a) are called Sunnah. This is found in three forms:

Statements of the Prophet (s) and Immaculate Imams ('a)

When the Prophet (s) and Immaculate Imams ('a) are asked to define greater Jihad, they reply: "It is to fight the soul of carnality."

Actions of the Prophet (s) and Immaculate Imams ('a)

In history we read that the Prophet of Islam (s) would sit in a circular fashion when taking his seat among a gathering of his companions. Or, in the course of the blessed lifetime of the Prophet of Islam (s) no person was able to precede His Holiness in offering the salutation 'salaam'.

Tacit approval of the Prophet (s) and Immaculate Imams ('a)

Whenever a person performed an action and the holy Prophet (s) and the Immaculate Imam ('a) did not prevent the performance of that action, that action received their tacit approval.

Definition of 'categorical' and 'ambiguous verses' in the Qur'an

The entire verses of the Qur'an are made up of two parts. One part is known as 'categorical verses' while the other part is known as 'ambiguous verses'. Those verses that are explicit and categorical or their revelation is in one direction are 'categorical verses', while verses that include several probabilities and have various dimensions are called 'ambiguous verses'.

Probability of ambiguities in Sunnah

Due to the narrated traditions (Ahadith) of the Prophet of Islam (s), some people believe that like the Qur'an, they also are, either categorical or ambiguous.

This view is incorrect, because we believe that the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam (s) is meant to explain the Qur'an and if it contains ambiguities, we could not interpret the Qur'an (the ambiguous verses). It is for this reason that we say that the Sunnah contains only categorical explanations without ambiguities.

With these preliminaries, we can quite well understand the upcoming words of Imam Ali (‘a). His Holiness has in a short sentence mentioned the position of the Qur’an and the Sunnah and their fundamental role in Islamic society on the basis of the glorious Qur’an. He states that the role is one of sovereignty, religious authority and last resort of reference. It means that when right cannot be distinguished from wrong, the ‘categorical verses’ of the Qur’an and Sunnah which are all clear and include one probability are the dominant authorities:

"وَارْدُدْ إِلَى الله وَرَسُولِهِ مَا يُضْلِعُكَ مِنَ الْخُطُوبِ، وَيَشْتَبِهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الأُمُورِ، فَقَدْ قَالَ اللهُ سبحانه لِقَوْم أَحَبَّ إِرْشَادَهُمْ:

«Refer those distressing problems, that you are confronted with and the affairs that are unclear to you, to God and His Prophet (s)! For God has stated to the nation that He loves:

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ ۖ فَإِن تَنَـٰزَعْتُمْ فِى شَىْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ وَٱلرَّسُولِ﴾

"O believers! Obey God and obey His Prophet and obey those in charge of the affairs (the rulers) from among you; and if you dispute over any matter, then refer it to Allah and His Prophet."

"فَالرَّدُّ إِلَى الله: الأَخْذُ بِمُحْكَمِ كِتَابِهِ، وَالرَّدُّ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ: الأَخْذُ بِسُنَّتِهِ الْجَامِعَةِ غَيْرِ الْمُفَرِّقَةِ".

Referring the matter to God means, act in accordance with what has been categorically stated in His Book. Referring it to the Prophet means, act on the basis of the categorical and universally accepted traditions of His Holiness.»

We understand that the instructions of the Prophet of God (s) and the Immaculate Imams (‘a) are divided into two groups:

1. The Commandments of God Almighty;
2. Administrative directives.

When the Prophet of Islam (s) and the Immaculate Imams (‘a) mention the commandments of God and speak of the lawful and the unlawful acts, and call upon the people to perform the obligatory acts and desist from prohibitions, they do so to state the Commandments of God. However, when they themselves form a government, such as the Prophet of Islam (s) did, and order the people to fight and obtain war equipment, these are administrative orders. They are distinct from those that are mentioned in the Qur’an and have been revealed to the Prophet of God (s). It is for this reason that the word ‘اطيعو’ has been repeated in the noble verse.

﴿ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ ﴾

implies the commandments of God;

﴿ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ ﴾

implies the administrative commandments.

On this basis the Arabic word اطيعوا has not been repeated in case of the rulers, because the administrative

commandments of the government of the Prophet of God (s) were transferred to them as well.

Importance of judgment and personality of the judge in Islam

The foundations of government shall be firm and unshakeable when there is no injustice, violation of rights and corruption in society. Injustice and corruption can be eliminated only when justice and judicial security are established with absolute authority and decisiveness in society and any type of coercion, gross infringements and injustices are eliminated. All of these can be possible when the government is able to appoint righteous and qualified Islamic judges.

The judiciary of a government shall be corrupt and weak that does not have qualified and righteous Islamic judges. Judicial security will be eliminated from society; violation and infringement of rights become all pervasive; rule of law and discipline will be destroyed; and, anarchy will demolish society's foundations and instigate corruption.

Who is the qualified Islamic judge?

From Imam Ali's ('a) point of view, the person who possesses the following qualifications merits being appointed to the difficult and sensitive position of judgment:

1. He should be the best and most superior of individuals
2. He should be extremely patient and tolerant and obtain all the necessary information from various angles to issue an equitable verdict.

3. Accept his mistakes with moral courage and immediately rectify his mistakes and compensate for them.
4. Not be angered quickly and not lose his cool, particularly, on the insistence of the disputing parties to restore their rights.
5. Have a powerful spirit and not be afraid of the powerful.
6. Have self-respect and supreme resolve and not be captive to greed and worldly ambitions, and not be tempted by the bribes offered by the rich.
7. Be investigative and not overlook issues because of negligence and leniency. Not judge without obtaining sufficient information, nor deliver a verdict with a superficial approach on the basis of initial hearings.
8. When faced with ambiguous matters and unclear and complex issues, he should not shun caution and seriously seek to uncover the truth on the basis of rationale and proofs.
9. He should welcome the disputing parties without showing signs of fatigue and discomfort, give each of the parties the opportunity to express their positions.
10. He should not be duped by the tricks and deceits of deceptive individuals, nor lose his self-control in the face of flattery and smooth talk.
11. Finally, after all the aforesaid attributes and qualifications, he should be absolutely decisive and

> when he has found out the truth, he should not allow any element to obstruct issuance of a final and just verdict. This means that he should deliver his judgment with absolute decisiveness, without taking sides, or being biased, or showing any consideration and regard towards one of the parties.

Then Imam Ali (‘a) cautions Malik and all rulers, that individuals with such qualities are a rarity, and a ruler needs to be appreciative of such a qualified and competent Islamic judge:

" ثُمَّ اخْتَرْ لِلْحُكْمِ بَيْنَ النَّاس أَفْضَلَ رَعِيَّتِكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ، مِمَّنْ لاَ تَضِيقُ بِهِ الأُمُورُ، وَلاَ تُمَحِّكُهُ الْخُصُومُ، وَلا يَتَمادَى فِي الزَّلَّةِ، وَلاَ يَحْصَرُ مِنَ الْفَيْءِ إِلَى الْحَقِّ إِذَا عَرَفَهُ، وَلا تُشْرِفُ نَفْسُهُ عَلَى طَمَع، وَلا يَكْتَفِي بِأَدْنَى فَهْم دُونَ أَقصَاهُ، أَوْقَفَهُمْ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ، وَآخَذَهُمْ بِالْحُجَجِ، وَأَقَلَّهُمْ تَبَرُّماً بِمُرَاجَعَةِ الْخَصْمِ، وَأَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى تَكَشُّفِ الأُمُورِ، وَأَصْرَمَهُمْ عِنْدَ اتّضَاحِ الْحُكْمِ، مِمَّنْ لاَ يَزْدَهِيهِ إِطْرَاءٌ، وَلاَ يَسْتَمِيلُهُ إِغْرَاءٌ،أُولئِكَ قَلِيلٌ".

«Select the person who, in your view, is the most distinguished for arbitration of disputes among people. One who is tolerant and who is not angered and provoked by the altercations of the parties to the dispute. He should not insist on his mistakes, and when he becomes aware of his own mistake, it should not be difficult for him to acknowledge and admit it. He should not allow greed to overpower him and not be content with just a little investigation. A person who is most circumspect when in

doubt; who is more persistent in finding and relying on reason; who is not overwhelmed by the large number of cases; who is more patient than others in resolving matters; who delivers verdicts decisively when the truth becomes evident; who is not deceived by excessive adulation and is not drawn towards taking the side of the party who praises him excessively – such persons are extremely rare.»

Duties of the leader in relation to competent Islamic judges

Two extremely important issues concerning duties of the leader and his attitude towards the Islamic judges as well as maintaining them in the post of judiciary come to the fore. These issues are even more important than finding these individuals in the first place.

First of all, the ruler must take care that the Islamic judge is not in financially straitened circumstances because, in that case, it is likely that he will resign from his job or become indifferent and not perform his duties properly. He could also fall into the quagmire of bribe-taking and corruption and replace truth with untruth, and vice versa.

Secondly, the ruler must strengthen the Islamic judge's position and give him an elevated station and worthy position at his side, so that; firstly, nobody is able to exercise influence and impose his wishes on him; secondly, nobody can tempt him; thirdly, nobody can dismiss him from his job nor bother and persecute him; and fourthly, nobody will dare to slander him and engage in conspiracy against him. Moreover, everybody should know that the righteous and impartial Islamic judge is

invulnerable to the slander of others as he enjoys the full confidence of the ruler and leader.

Imam Ali (‘a) asks for greater attention of the rulers towards the role of the righteous Islamic judges in executing justice, in preventing anarchy and corruption, as well as, in implementing the commandments of God. In this regard, he recalls a period between the passing away of the Prophet of Islam (s) and his own administration, when Islam had been subjected to the carnal lusts and desires of miscreants who, in the name of religion, perpetrated the most heinous crimes and crushed Islam’s judicial machinery in order to achieve their own evil objectives.

"ثُمَّ أَكْثِرْ تَعَاهُدَ قَضَائِهِ، وافْسَحْ لَهُ فِي الْبَذْلِ مَا يُزِيلُ عِلَّتَهُ، وَتَقِلُّ مَعَهُ حَاجَتُهُ إِلَى النَّاس، وَأَعْطِهِ مِنَ الْمَنْزِلَةِ لَدَيْكَ مَا لاَ يَطْمَعُ فِيهِ غَيْرُهُ مِنْ خَاصَّتِكَ، لِيَأْمَنَ بِذلَكَ اغْتِيَالَ الرِّجَالِ لَهُ عِنْدَكَ. فَانْظُرْ فِي ذلِكَ نَظَراً بَلِيغاً، فَإِنَّ هذَا الدِّينَ قَدْ كَانَ أَسِيراً فِي أَيْدِي الأَشْرَارِ، يُعْمَلُ فِيهِ بِالْهَوَى، وَتُطْلَبُ بِهِ الدُّنْيَا".

«Then, after selecting the Islamic judge, check his workings and examine his verdicts. Be generous with regard to his remuneration so that his needs are met and he does not need to stretch out his hands to the people for his living. Increase his station so that your inner circle is not tempted to aspire for his position and he remains safe from the slander of rumor-mongers and ill-wishers.

Look into the tasks that I have mentioned meticulously, because, in the past, this religion was a captive in the

hands of miscreants who acted on the basis of their carnal and vain desires and who used it as a means to attain worldly objectives.»

Primacy of criteria instead of relations in selection of government executives

In supreme Islamic society, doing away with nepotism, granting unfair favors to one’s clique and following personal inclinations is one of the most basic and critical issues of society and administration. In Islamic culture, criteria and the law replace personal relations and inclinations. Islamic justice demands that in distribution of posts and high offices, the good human qualities and Islamic advantages be taken into consideration and every individual attains a suitable station on the basis of his qualifications, expertise and religious merits. According to Imam Ali (‘a), a competent ruler does not take any factor into consideration when selecting individuals to top posts other than justly giving the deserving person his due; and does not appoint a government executive without looking carefully at the attributes of individuals and putting them to the test. It is for this reason that His Holiness instructs Malik and all Islamic rulers to consider only the Islamic yardsticks when appointing the top officials and executives. They should never involve personal relations and give unfair advantage to their own faction in this matter.

In brief, the criteria that Imam Ali (‘a) enumerates for credentials and appointment of a government executive are:

1. He should be qualified and experienced, seasoned by the events and hardships he has endured.
2. He should be righteous, virtuous, chaste, of good moral character and possess self-control.
3. He should hail from a noble, righteous, pious and decent family and should not have been brought up in an environment of oppression, treason and immorality.
4. He should possess a good background and have a longer track record than others in Islam. It means that he should be a person who has embraced the religion of God before the influence, expansion and power of Islam and not be of those that have submitted to Islam only when they witnessed its growing splendor or, out of fear or, to take undue advantage of the power of Islam or, in order to attain a position, wealth and welfare.
5. He should possess a good personality and constantly aim to preserve himself and cleanse his soul by shunning all sorts of misdemeanors and corrupt practices.
6. He should be farsighted and possess an aptitude for management. He should be a strategist, deep thinker and analytical.
7. He should not set his eyes on material objectives, should possess dignity, as well as soundness of spirit.

While enumerating the attributes of government executives, Imam Ali (‘a) also states the duties of the ruler in selecting these individuals, which include:

1. The administrator must pay careful attention to the affairs and workings of employees and employ them only after meticulous testing.
2. He should not select these individuals only on the basis of his personal, dictatorial opinion. Rather, he should respect the opinions of others and consult them.
3. Give enough time to his executives to show their aptitude and talents, and also to put their efficiency to the test, analyses and opinions of others.
4. He should not appoint a person to a post due to personal inclinations or, because of an attribute present in a person, which has no relevance to the post and responsibility under consideration.

Then Imam Ali (‘a) states that if a ruler appoints a person to a position without taking into consideration the aforesaid Islamic criteria, his step is in fact like the root from which the diverse branches of tyranny, oppression and treason emerge:

”ثُمَّ انْظُرْ فِي أُمُورِ عُمَّالِكَ، فَاسْتَعْمِلْهُمُ اخْتِبَاراً، وَلاَ تُوَلِّهِمْ مُحَابَاةً وأَثَرَةً ، فَإِنَّهُمَا جِمَاعٌ مِنْ شُعَبِ الْجَوْرِ وَالْخِيَانَةِ. وَتوَخَّ مِنْهُمْ أَهْلَ التَّجْرِبَةِ وَالْحَيَاءِ، مِنْ أَهْلِ الْبُيُوتَاتِ الصَّالِحَةِ، وَالْقَدَمِ فِي الاِسْلاَمِ الْمُتَقَدِّمَةِ،

فَإِنَّهُمْ أَكْرَمُ أَخْلاَقاً، وَأَصَحُّ أَعْرَاضاً، وَأَقَلُّ فِي الْمَطَامِعِ إِشْرَافاً، وَأَبْلَغُ فِي عَوَاقِبِ الأُمُورِ نَظَراً".

«Thereafter, supervise the affairs of your executives; and appoint them to a job after having tested them and not randomly out of magnanimity, and despotism, because this is a type of injustice and treason. Choose people who are experienced, decent and hail from righteous families that are at the forefront of Islam, because their moral behavior is better, their families are more decent, their greed is less and they are more farsighted in assessing the ramifications of their actions.»

Meeting the material needs of civil servants

On the subject of the duties of an Islamic ruler vis-à-vis his colleagues and government executives, Imam Ali (‘a) considers paying attention to the material affairs and needs of civil servants to be one of the important pillars of management that prevents subversion by employees, embezzlement of public funds, bribery, and gross violation of rights and disintegration of the social system. He counsels that if the material needs of civil servants are met, even unrighteous individuals shall not find an excuse for stealing, subversion and bribery, and in case they commit such an act, they shall be rendered speechless and humiliated in front of the leader and have no justification to offer in their own defense. However, if their material needs have not been met, the urgency of their need shall cause them to deviate from the right path and weaken the spirit of trustworthiness in them. In this case the ruler shall not be able to give them an ultimatum, because they

would justify their theft and subversion and put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the ruler for having kept them in a situation of deprivation and poverty, while entrusting them with valuable public properties.

"ثُمَّ أَسْبِغْ عَلَيْهِمُ الأَرْزَاقَ، فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ قُوَّةٌ لَهُمْ عَلَى اسْتِصْلاَحِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ، وَغِنىً لَهُمْ عَنْ تَنَاوُلِ مَا تَحْتَ أَيْدِيهِمْ، وَحُجَّةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنْ خَالَفُوا أَمْرَكَ أَوْ ثَلَمُوا أَمَانَتَكَ".

«Thereafter, pay them a commensurate salary, because this will strengthen their individual personality and prevent them from laying their hands on the properties of subordinates. In addition, this will be an ultimatum to them if they disobey orders or commit a breach of trust.»

The leader monitoring the administration

The leader needs to monitor the performance of the executives; the way they deal with the people, the veracity or falsity of the reports that they give to the leader concerning the progress of their affairs and performance of duties; the level of accuracy of complaints filed by people and sent to the ruler concerning the administrative executives as well as tens of other issues. A good ruler not only has a right to investigate them; rather, these investigations are among his most important and constructive duties, to prevent them from misusing their position, violating the rights of people, and resorting to subversion, injustice and corruption. To prevent such a situation, it is necessary to monitor the workings of the civil servants constantly; and install a precise and dependable system of inspection that gives accurate and

reliable reports to the leader concerning the government employees.

These inspectors must be among the closest and most trusted companions of the leader. They should be God-fearing, pious, devoted, honest and trustworthy individuals, about whom the leader is absolutely confident that their reports will be devoid of lies, deceptions and blemish, and that they shall not consider any other factor except serving God, Islam and the Islamic administration.

Islam describes the administration's inspectors as eyes of the government. This is because the inspector is in fact the eyes of the ruler, without whom the administration is like a blind man, who does not see the flaws and gets drowned in the quagmire of flaws and corruptions. Imam Ali ('a) advises the Islamic ruler to send these 'eyes' covertly to various parts of the country. This results in governmental executives and civil servants to desist from misappropriation and subversion, and to behave cordially and leniently with the people and solve people's problems speedily and diligently.

The inspectors need to enjoy the confidence of the leader and their reports should be investigated. If the inspectors report the flaws and corruption of government employees but these reports are not paid attention to and regarded with circumspection and hesitation, then no one shall pay attention to the system of inspection. In this case, unrighteous individuals shall continue with their corrupt and subversive practices and throw society into a quandary.

If one of the civil servants or even an individual from among the inner circle of the ruler engages in corrupt

practices, and the reports of the covert inspectors also endorse the subject, these same reports need to be investigated immediately.

Then Imam Ali (‘a) specifies the leader’s approach in dealing with subversive individuals in the following manner: “Punish the traitor for his misdeeds! Implement the prescribed limits of punishment commensurate with his treason – neither more nor less! Disgrace and dishonor the traitor and consign him to abasement and humiliation! Stamp the seal of treachery on his forehead and hang the necklace of shame and ignominy round his neck in such a way that he becomes conspicuous among the people; his fate becomes a lesson for others and he does not find the opportunity to commit treason and corruption among the people anymore.”

Imam Ali (‘a) has responded to any likely criticism concerning the trust and confidence in inspectors. If some of them give false and damaging reports, what could be the argument for having confidence in them? Imam Ali (‘a) calls upon the ruler to pursue any task from various channels, so that, whenever a report is endorsed by several channels and agreed upon unanimously, there is no doubt left in the ruler’s mind about its accuracy. It means that despite all the conditions placed for selection of inspectors, firstly, the report of none of them alone is final; and secondly, further investigation and analyses shall be performed whenever there is no unanimous agreement and opinion on a report. Moreover, the false report of an inspector is tantamount to the civil servants’ treason and misappropriation, which shall by itself lead to severe punishment, disgrace and dishonor in society.

"ثُمَّ تَفَقَّدْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ، وَابْعَثِ الْعُيُونَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الصِّدْقِ وَالوَفَاءِ عَلَيْهِمْ، فَإِنَّ تَعَاهُدَكَ فِي السِّرِّ لِأُمُورِهِمْ حَدْوَةٌ لَهُمْ عَلَى اسْتِعْمَالِ الأَمَانَةِ، وَالرِّفْقِ بِالرَّعِيَّةِ. وَتَحَفَّظْ مِنَ الأَعْوَانِ، فَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ بَسَطَ يَدَهُ إِلَى خِيَانَة اجْتَمَعَتْ بِهَا عَلَيْهِ عِنْدَكَ أَخْبَارُ عُيُونِكَ، اكْتَفَيْتَ بِذلِكَ شَاهِداً، فَبَسَطْتَ عَلَيْهِ الْعُقُوبَةَ فِي بَدَنِهِ، وَأَخَذْتَهُ بِمَا أَصَابَ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ، ثُمَّ نَصَبْتَهُ بِمَقَامِ الْمَذَلَّةِ، وَ وَسَمْتَهُ بِالْخِيانَةِ، وَقَلَّدْتَهُ عَارَ التُّهَمَةِ".

«Thereafter, monitor their work by sending honest and loyal undercover agents! This is because covert inspection of their job compels them to observe trust and to be lenient with the masses.

Keep an eye on your aides and assistants with great care! If one of them commits treason and your undercover agents collectively endorse it, you must regard that as enough evidence and punish the disloyal individual without delay - and punish him to the extent of the treason he has committed! Thereafter, disgrace and dishonor him and stamp the seal of treachery brazenly on his forehead and hang the necklace of shame and ignominy round his neck.»

Importance of Agriculture and terminological definition of 'Kharaaj' (land tax)

At the time of the advent of Islam, the economy was dependent on agricultural lands and harvests produced, and thus, taxes were levied only on agricultural land and produce.

The government would specify a certain portion of the farmland (for example, one-third or one half etc…) as tax, which was called *Muqasamah*; while, if taxes were levied in a definite form (such as two-hundred Dirhams per hectare of land) it was called *Kharaaj* (land tax). Persons to whom the *Kharaaj* and *Muqasamah* were given were called *Ahle Kharaaj* (receivers of land tax).

What was the importance of agriculture and what was its role in society's evolutionary economic movement?

We know that the majority of those living in cities and have no alternative but to accept the urban lifestyle are consumers, (and the more prosperous they are, the more they consume), and their livelihood is secured through production by the rural inhabitants and farmers, (who toil on the land and natural resources). They do not produce anything on their own. If the agriculturists, with their toil and effort, harvest a greater amount of agricultural commodities, the needs of the urban inhabitants are secure, otherwise no urban inhabitant will be able to provide for his own basic necessities. It is for this reason that agriculture shall not lose its importance and worth at any point in time and always remain the supplier of the basic necessities of human beings.

On the other hand, urban inhabitants do not secure their essential needs directly and without intermediary; rather, they obtain them through traders, intermediaries and other elements, who buy the surplus livestock and farmland products of the farmers. Naturally, farmers and peasants obtain their essentials of living such as clothing, tools and work equipment as well as other needs from the money that they get by selling the surplus of their harvests. These

transactions lead to economic boom and progress of society – and all this depends on the work of the agriculturists. It is for this reason that disruption in the work of farmers never remains confined to their own lives but spreads everywhere, cripples work activities and leads society to economic disintegration and destruction:

"وَتفَقَّدْ أَمْرَ الْخَرَاجِ بِمَا يُصْلِحُ أَهْلَهُ، فَإِنَّ فِي صلاَحِهِ وَصلاَحِهِمْ صَلاَحاً لِمَنْ سِوَاهُمْ، وَلاَ صَلاَحَ لِمَنْ سِوَاهُمْ إِلاَّ بِهِمْ، لأَنَّ النَّاسَ كُلَّهُمْ عِيَالٌ عَلَى الْخَرَاجِ وَأَهْلِهِ".

«Attend to the affairs of Kharaaj (land tax) in a manner that the condition of those paying Kharaaj improves; because, if the Kharaaj is put in order, other classes of society shall live in peace and comfort. Other classes of society do not have peace and comfort except by relying on them, because all people are dependent on taxes for their stipends.»

Government's efforts at strengthening agriculture

If the government is to rely on *Kharaaj* for its budget, it needs to furnish the grounds for it. The government must assist the hardworking farmers in maintaining the land, securing water, regulating the irrigation system, constructing canals, bridges, dams, drilling deep wells, and building various means of communication between agricultural regions to give a greater boost to agriculture. Only then can the government expect people to pay taxes, because, if a country where agriculture is not developed and the farmers have insufficient income, imposing any type of taxes on the nation would be a debilitating

imposition leading to discontent, insecurity, ruin, and the government’s downfall. Imam Ali (‘a) considers payment of taxes to be subject to people’s income and has stated that before thinking of imposing taxes, the ruler needs to think about the progress and development of the country.

"وَلْيَكُنْ نَظَرُكَ فِي عِمَارَةِ الأَرْض أَبْلَغَ مِنْ نَظَرِكَ فِي اسْتِجْلاَبِ الْخَرَاجِ، لاَِنَّ ذلِكَ لاَ يُدْرَكُ إِلاَّ بَالْعِمَارَةِ، وَمَنْ طَلَبَ الْخَرَاجَ بِغَيْرِ عِمَارَة أَخْرَبَ الْبِلاَدَ، وَأَهْلَكَ الْعِبَادَ، وَلَمْ يَسْتَقِمْ أَمْرُهُ إِلاَّ قَلِيلاً".

«Your attention should be focused more on development of the land than on receiving taxes, because receipt of land taxes is not feasible except through development of the land. One, who demands land taxes from the people without making any effort towards its development, has in fact destroyed the cities and slaughtered the creatures of God. Such a regime shall not survive except for a short period.»

Tax Rebates

Farmers are the most hardworking of all classes. Their lives are a hostage to natural factors. The least negligence shown towards natural phenomena and its blessings leads to heavy losses. For this reason, the farmer is compelled to devote all his attention, throughout the year and in all circumstances, to his farmland and not neglect it for a moment, in contrast to others, who can work when they wish and regulate their lives as they please.

When their labor is so energy-sapping and debilitating, their standard of living should also be commensurate with it, so that the farmer feels that his labor benefits him and

does not feel oppressed and exploited. He should feel that the land belongs to him and be confident that nobody else can take away his livelihood.

Another important issue is that the opinion of the farmer concerning the farmland and its fertility need to be taken into consideration. If he complains of plant diseases and their effect on his productivity and considers himself incapable of paying land tax, the governmental authorities need to understand his problems and reduce the amount of his tax or disregard it altogether. This is because reducing taxes (at a time when farmers are needy) is a step that will ultimately benefit the government itself so that the farmer shall strive with more resources at his disposal and cheerfully develop and improve the land and meet the essential needs, thereby, increase prosperity of agricultural regions and ultimately of society.

Another outcome of this step is the sense of confidence and satisfaction that urges the farmers (70% of the population) to love the government in power with his heart and soul; and support it in times of difficulty and back it in times of crises. It is for this reason that Imam Ali (‘a) states:

"فَإِنْ شَكَوْا ثِقَلاً أَوْ عِلَّةً، أَوِ انْقِطَاعَ شِرْب أَوْ بَالَّة، أَوْ إِحَالَةَ أَرْض اغْتَمَرَهَا غَرَقٌ، أَوْ أَجْحَفَ بِهَا عَطَشٌ، خَفَّفْتَ عَنْهُمْ بِما تَرْجُو أَنْ يصْلُحَ بِهِ أَمْرُهُمْ، وَلاَ يَثْقُلَنَّ عَلَيْكَ شَيْءٌ خَفَّفْتَ بِهِ الْمَؤُونَةَ عَنْهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُ ذُخْرٌ يَعُودُونَ بِهِ عَلَيْكَ فِي عِمَارَةِ بِلادِكَ، وَتَزْيِين وِلاَيَتِكَ، مَعَ اسْتِجْلاَبِكَ حُسْنَ ثَنَائِهِمْ، وَتَبَجُّحِكَ بِاسْتِفَاضَةِ الْعَدْلِ فِيهِمْ، مُعْتَمِداً فَضْلَ قُوَّتِهِمْ،

بِمَا ذَخَرْتَ نْدَهُمْ مِنْ إِجْمَامِكَ لَهُمْ، وَالثِّقَةَ مِنْهُمْ بِمَا عَوَّدْتَهُمْ مِنْ عَدْلِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي رِفْقِكَ بِهِمْ، فَرُبَّمَا حَدَثَ مِنَ الأُمُورِ مَا إِذَا عَوَّلْتَ فِيهِ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدُ احْتَمَلُوهُ طَيِّبَةً أَنْفُسُهُمْ بِهِ، فَإِنَّ الْعُمْرَانَ مُحْتَمِلٌ مَا حَمَّلْتَهُ".

«If people complain of heavy taxation or of crop disease or of water scarcity or of lack of rainfall and dew or of rotting of the grain due to flooding or drought, you should give them a rebate on taxes to an extent that they are able to manage their affair. This rebate should not weigh heavily on you because it is a saving which is returned to you in the form of development of the cities and prosperity of your territory. In addition, you earn their praise and you, yourself, shall also be pleased for having meted out justice to them. You shall be able to rely on them when they are strong, as they will assist you because you have been the cause of their prosperity; and meted out justice to them and been compassionate. Often, certain problems occur in the course of various events that if you leave it to them to resolve, they shall accept it assuredly for there is infinite potential to develop the country.»

Consequences of inattention to farmers

From the previous statement of Imam Ali (‘a) we conclude that when heavy taxes are imposed on farmers and the government takes no action to develop and maintain the farmland, they shall feel they are not working for their own benefit nor receiving the desired income in relation to the energy-sapping hard work they are putting in, while, others are getting the rewards for their labor. As a result of these feelings, the farmers shall

necessarily be compelled to lie, deceive and engage in contraband, theft and other deviant behavior. Thus, instead of earning their livelihood by working on their farm, they shall either resort to criminal activities for their living or, lie in ambush for the livelihood of others.

Another consequence of such a situation is that the young and active rural manpower will migrate to other cities in search of a better living and end up hawking on the streets, (and do other unproductive jobs that are nowadays quite common in cities). The natural outcome of this situation is joblessness of upright rural youth and their contamination with vice and immorality leading to humiliation of the government and administration.

Factors of downfall and degeneration of the administration

If government officials have no confidence in the administration and perceive it to be weak and on the way out, and accumulate wealth, failing to learn lessons from past events, they become the cause of its downfall.

"وَإِنَّمَا يُؤْتَى خَرَابُ الأَرْض مِنْ إِعْوَازِ أَهْلِهَا، إِنَّمَا يُعْوِزُ أَهْلُهَا لإِشْرَافِ أَنْفُس الْوُلاَةِ عَلَى الْجَمْعِ، وَسُوءِ ظَنِّهِمْ بِالْبَقَاءِ، وَقِلَّةِ انْتِفَاعِهِمْ بِالْعِبَرِ".

«The destruction of the land is the result of the poverty of those who work on it. The situation of those that till the land worsens only when government officials concentrate on accumulation of wealth and not learn lessons from past occurrences.»

The best criteria for employment

One of the supreme objectives of Islam is to establish justice and equality in society and create a perfect equilibrium in the community. A governor needs to observe justice while choosing his deputies. He should possess all the good human qualities mentioned by Imam Ali (‘a) in a single sentence:

”ثُمَّ انْظُرْ فِي حَالِ كُتَّابِكَ، فَوَلِّ عَلَى أُمُورِكَ خَيْرَهُمْ، وَاخْصُصْ رَسَائِلَكَ الَّتِي تُدْخِلُ فِيهَا مَكَائِدَكَ وأَسْرَارَكَ بِأَجْمَعِهِمْ لِوُجُودِ صَالِحِ الأَخْلاَقِ مِمَّنْ لاَ تُبْطِرُهُ الْكَرَامَةُ، فَيَجْتَرِىءَ بِهَا عَلَيْكَ فِي خِلاَف لَكَ بِحَضْرَةِ مَلاَ، وَلاَ تُقَصِّرُ بِهِ الْغَفْلَةُ عَنْ إِيرَادِ مُكَاتَبَاتِ عُمَّالِكَ عَلَيْكَ، وَإِصْدَارِ جَوَابَاتِهَا عَلَى الصَّوابِ عَنْكَ، وَفِيمَا يَأْخُذُ لَكَ وَيُعْطِي مِنْكَ، وَلاَ يُضعِفُ عَقْداً اعْتَقَدَهُ لَكَ، وَلاَ يَعْجِزُ عَنْ إِطْلاَقِ مَا عُقِدَ عَلَيْكَ، وَلاَ يَجْهَلُ مَبْلَغَ قَدْرِ نَفسِهِ فِي الأُمُورِ، فَإِنَّ الْجَاهِلَ بِقَدْرِ نَفْسِهِ يَكُونُ بِقَدْرِ غَيْرِهِ أَجْهَلَ”.

«Scrutinize the issue of your deputies carefully, and appoint the most qualified among them to manage your affairs. Entrust those of your confidential letters that outline your policies and secret agenda to the most righteous of them from the point of view of character! He should be a person who, later on, is not drawn towards vanity and who never opposes you in public; one who neither neglects to present the letters of the governors to you, nor neglects to issue your replies on the basis of your expedience; one who knows how to prepare agreements (and is not careless and procrastinating); and if he has entered into an agreement that is damaging to you, he is

capable of resolving it and is also aware of his own worth and position, because anybody who is unaware of his own worth cannot understand the worth of others, and is inevitably apprehensive of dealing with them »

Good service and personal relations should not be the only criteria

We all know that those who are in positions of authority find plenty of friends!! More amazing is that these friends also seem to possess a good moral character. Some individuals wear the garb of piety and asceticism and become the spokesmen of the devoted worshippers. At times they talk of courage and bravado and ridicule the clash between the likes of the legendary fighters Rustam and Isfandiyar. One day, they regard themselves more generous than the fabled Hatam while, at another time, they imagine themselves to be the outstanding philosophers of the era. However, these sorts of statements (and false moves) are strategies that opportunists use in their fervent attempts to draw the attention of those at the helm of affairs and to take charge of the critical tasks.

For this reason, Imam Ali (‘a) counsels Malik not to make personal relations and acquaintances the criteria of selection; rather, in addition to the aforementioned criteria, he should take the following criteria into consideration as well:

”ثُمَّ لاَ يَكُن اخْتِيَارُكَ إِيَّاهُمْ عَلَى فِرَاسَتِكَ وَاسْتِنَامَتِكَ وَحُسْنِ الظَّنِّ مِنْكَ، فَإِنَّ الرِّجَالَ يَتَعَرَّفُونَ لِفِرَاسَاتِ الْوُلاَةِ بِتَصَنُّعِهِمْ وَحُسْنِ خِدْمَتِهِمْ، لَيْسَ

وَرَاءَ ذلِكَ مِنَ النَّصِيحَةِ وَالأَمَانَةِ شَيْءٌ، وَلكِن اخْتَبِرْهُمْ بِمَا وَلُوا لِلصَّالِحِينَ".

«Selection of your deputies should not be solely based on your good impression and confidence in them; because some men by means of flattery and least opposition, attempt to pass themselves off as good, experienced and liberal individuals whereas, there is no trace of righteousness, trustworthiness and sympathy behind their posturing. You should test them on the basis of their cooperation with virtuous people, before you select the best from among them, well-known for his integrity and honor and a better influence on people. This selection shall prove your adherence to the commandment of God and your Imam (leader).»

Division of labor and selection of manager

While mentioning division of labor, Imam Ali ('a) advises Malik to appoint a specific official with unique attributes responsible for any task, : "A person who heads a proceeding needs to have so much power that the enormity and magnitude of the task does not overwhelm him because, ultimately, all the failings shall be blamed on the viceroy and the governor."

"وَاجْعَلْ لِرَأْسِ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ مِنْ أُمُورِكَ رَأْساً مِنْهُمْ، لاَ يَقْهَرُهُ كَبِيرُهَا، وَلاَ يَتَشَتَّتُ عَلَيْهِ كَثِيرُهَا، وَمَهْمَا كَانَ فِي كُتَّابِكَ مِنْ عَيْبٍ فَتَغَابَيْتَ عَنْه أُلْزِمْتَهُ."

«Appoint a manager for each of your undertakings – a manager who is neither rendered incapable by the importance of the task, nor overwhelmed by its magnitude. Whenever there is a failing in your deputies and you are negligent of it, people shall blame you for it.»

Traders, professionals and laborers

Commerce is good, desirable and encouraged by Islam provided that it improves the general standard of living conditions of the people and opens the path of God to them. However, if it becomes the aim of life and a means of flaunting one's wealth, it is condemned by Islam as it becomes a source of misery for human beings.

By traders and industrialists is meant the strata who do not regard trade and industry as the object of living; rather, they reckon this activity as a means to secure a livelihood, improve the community's condition, and enable human evolution. Commerce, with this aim, is encouraged; and such traders have been given the promise of association with the most sincere believers and martyrs in the path of God, as well. The honorable Prophet of Islam (s) states thus on the subject:

"البَرَكَةُ عَشْرَةُ أجزاءٍ تسْعَةُ أعْشَارَها فِي التّجارةِ".

«If bounty is to be divided into ten parts, then nine parts of it shall be in commerce.»[1]

"التّاجِرُ الْصَدُوقُ يُحْشَرُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَعَ الْصِدِّيقِينَ وَالْشُّهَداء".

1. **Bihar al-Anwar**, vol. 23, p. 5.

«On the Day of Resurrection the honest traders shall be in the company of the sincere believers and the martyrs.»[1]

"اَلتِّجارَةُ تَزيدُ فِي الْعَقْل ـ تَركُ التِّجارَةِ يَنْقُصُ الْعَقْل".

«Commerce adds to the wisdom of human beings; while abandoning commerce retards the mind.»[2]

"تَعَرَّضُوا لِلتِّجَارَةِ فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيها غِنىً، فِي أيْدِي النّاس".

«Engage in commerce for, through it, you shall become self-reliant.»[3]

" ثُمَّ اسْتَوْصِ بِالتُّجَّارِ وَذَوِي الصِّنَاعَاتِ، وَأَوْصِ بِهِمْ خَيْراً : اَلْمُقِيمِ مِنْهُمْ، وَالْمُضْطَرِبِ بِمَالِهِ، وَالْمُتَرَفِّقِ بِبَدَنِهِ، فَإِنَّهُمْ مَوَادُّ الْمَنَافِعِ، وَأَسْبَابُ الْمَرَافِقِ، وَجُلاَّبُهَا مِنَ الْمَبَاعِدِ وَالْمَطَارِحِ، فِي بَرِّكَ وَبَحْرِكَ، وَسَهْلِكَ وَجَبَلِكَ، وَحَيْثُ لاَ يَلْتَئِمُ النَّاسُ لِمَوَاضِعِهَا، وَلاَ يَجْتَرِئُونَ عَلَيْهَا، فَإِنَّهُمْ سِلْمٌ لاَ تُخَافُ بَائِقَتُهُ ، وَصُلْحٌ لاَ تُخْشَى غَائِلَتُهُ، وَتَفَقَّدْ أُمُورَهُمْ بِحَضْرَتِكَ وَفِي حَوَاشِي بِلاَدِكَ".

«Now about traders and industrialists; take my advice and you too, give them sound advice! Whether those that are stationed in cities (shopkeepers) or, those that move around with their goods, or, those that are the source of benefit and basis of boom in livelihood, and make use of their physical strength to secure the needs of people from

1. **'Ihiya' al-'Ulum**, vol. 2, p. 45.
2. **Kafi's Subsidiaries**, vol. 1, p. 37.
3. **Kafi's Subsidiaries**, vol. 1 p. 37.

far and distant cities through sea and land, plain and mountainous regions, and areas that people do not journey to and do not dare to journey. They are the source of reconciliation and affection and serenity; and there is no fear of loss and danger with respect to them. Seek to know about their circumstances and attend to their affairs–those that live in your area, as well as, those that reside in other cities.»

Limitations of commerce

While Islam is in favor of free trade and commerce and encourages traders, at the same time it considers certain frameworks for profit-making and has devised specific decrees and norms for commerce. By adopting the slogan "الفقه ثم المتجر" it believes that before engaging in trade, the traders need to learn the customs and norms of trade so that their work does not lead to degeneration of society and they themselves do not commit the unlawful.

The eminent Islamic jurists have made certain recommendations, by relying on the works of the Immaculate Imams (ʻa), for traders:

1. In the course of a transaction the seller should not be harsh and ill-tempered with the buyer
2. He should not discriminate between customers concerning the price of merchandise
3. He should desist from swearing, true or false
4. He should tell the customer if there is a flaw in the merchandise

5. The seller should, as far as possible, not refuse to take back the merchandise
6. The seller should avoid excessive ‘sales talk’ concerning his merchandise
7. There should be no shortchanging involved
8. There should be no hoarding
9. There should be no bullying

Imam Ali (‘a) states to Malik al-Ashtar:

"وَاعْلَمْ ـ مَعَ ذلِكَ ـ أنَّ فِي كَثِير مِنْهُمْ ضِيقاً اَحِشاً، وَشُحّاً قَبِيحاً، وَاحْتِكَاراً لِلْمَنَافِعِ، وَتَحَكُّماً فِي الْبِيَاعَاتِ، وَذلِكَ بَابُ مَضَرَّة لِلْعَامَّةِ، وَعَيْبٌ عَلَى الْوُلاَةِ، فَامْنَعْ مِنَ الاْحْتِكَارِ، فَإنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ ﷺ مَنَعَ مِنْهُ. وَلْيَكُن الْبَيْعُ بَيْعاً سَمْحاً: بِمَوَازِين عَدْل، وَأَسْعَار لاَ تُجْحِفُ بِالْفَرِيقَيْن مِنَ الْبَائِعِ وَالْمُبْتَاعِ، فَمَنْ قَارَفَ حُكْرَةً بَعْدَ نَهْيِكَ إيَّاهُ فَنَكِّلْ، وَعَاقِبْ فِي غَيْرِ إسْرَاف".

«Know that many of them are excessively ruthless in buying and selling and display a disgusting miserliness; and engage in hoarding merchandise in order to earn greater profit; and resort to bullying in transaction (and sell at any price they wish). These acts are harmful to the masses and a shameful blot on the officials.

Therefore, prevent hoarding because the Prophet of God (s) had prohibited it. Buying and selling must take place easily and in accordance with the norms of justice. The rates should not put pressure on any of the parties (both buyers and sellers). Punish the hoarders who, despite

your reminder, indulge in hoarding activities and be not excessive (profligate) in meting out punishment to them.»

From the above statement, we understand that in Islamic commerce, both hoarding as well as bullying and monopolizing are forbidden. We all know that nowadays, capitalists pressurize people in two ways:

They attempt to stockpile the essential needs of people and place them out of the reach of people to sell them later when they become more expensive and absolutely unavailable, at a higher price in the black market. This act is called hoarding-to-black-market, which is forbidden in Islam and the hoarder, punishable.

Sometimes, some wealthy people come together and by wheeling and dealing gain total monopoly of a certain merchandise so that if a person wants to procure that particular merchandise, he has to purchase it from them. This act is monopolization and is not compatible with Islam.

Imam Ali (ʻa) demonstrates the ugliness of both acts in two phrases (وَاحْتِكاراً لِلْمَنافِع، وَتَحَكّماً فِي الْبياعاتِ). He instructs Malik to put a price tag on the merchandise and not give full freedom to the traders to do as they desire. With this approach, and by punishing hoarders and monopolists, he prevents them from taking undue advantage and misusing their position.

Position of laborers and the downtrodden

In every society, there are a group of people who, due to various reasons, are not able to perform any task or, perform a job which does not pay enough and, therefore,

are always in dire straits. If the situation of this group of society’s individuals is not looked into, their youth shall be driven to corruption and vice, while the weak and helpless ones among them shall die of hunger.

Continuation of this situation is dangerous for any society, and humiliating for an Islamic society. It is imperative to get rid of the poverty and misery of the weaker classes, transform their youth into active members, and raise their standard of living to a respectable level. The progressive world of today claims to have such a mission; and by devising laws it has managed to guide laborers towards their actual rights and rescue the weaker strata from their miserable living conditions.

In our view, although in today’s world, workers and the weaker strata, have managed to eke out a living, however, this claim has simply remained a slogan, because, workers and the weaker sections in the advanced industrial world (such as in the United States of America, Russia, Britain, Germany, France etc…) are still chanting the slogan of fighting exploitation, poverty, and misery, and seeking assistance to change their status quo.

In contrast, Imam Ali’s (‘a) instructions, labor law, and manner of attending to the condition of the needy, is comprehensive as well as progressive, considering that it was devised more than thirteen hundred years ago and reached the stage of action. Malik was mandated to carry out the orders of his master in the following manner:

" ثُمَّ اللهَ اللهَ فِي الطَّبَقَةِ السُّفْلَى مِنَ الَّذِينَ لاَ حِيلَةَ لَهُمْ وَالْمَسَاكِين وَالْـمُحْتَاجِينَ وَأَهْلِ الْبُؤْسَى وَالزَّمْنَى، فإنَّ فِي هذِهِ الطَّبَقَةِ قَانِعاً وَمُعْتَرّاً، وَاحْفَظْ لله مَا اسْتَحْفَظَكَ مِنْ حَقِّهِ فِيهِمْ، وَاجْعَلْ لَهُمْ قِسماً مِنْ بَيْتِ مَالِكَ، وَقِسماً مِنْ غَلاَّتِ صَوَافِي الأِسْلاَمِ فِي كُلِّ بَلَد، فإنَّ لِلأَقْصَى مِنْهُمْ مِثْلَ الَّذِي لِلأَدْنَى، وَكُلٌّ قَدِ اسْتُرْعِيتَ حَقَّهُ، فَلاَ يَشْغَلَنَّكَ عَنْهُمْ بَطَرٌ، فَإِنَّكَ لاَ تُعْذَرُ بِتَضْيِيعِ التَّافِهَ لاِحْكَامِكَ الْكَثِيرَ الْمُهِمَّ. فَلاَ تُشْخِصْ هَمَّكَ عَنْهُمْ، وَلاَ تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لَهُمْ، وَتَفَقَّدْ أُمُورَ مَنْ لاَ يَصِلُ إِلَيْكَ مِنْهُمْ مِمَّنْ تَقْتَحِمُهُ الْعُيُونُ، وَتَحْقِرُهُ الرِّجَالُ، فَفَرِّغْ لاُولئِكَ ثِقَتَكَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْخَشْيَةِ وَالتَّوَاضُعِ، فَلْيَرْفَعْ إِلَيْكَ أُمُورَهُمْ، ثُمَّ اعْمَلْ فِيهِمْ بَالأَعْذَارِ إِلَى الله تَعَالَى يَوْمَ تَلْقَاهُ، فَإِنَّ هؤُلاَء مِنْ بَيْنِ الرَّعِيَّةِ أَحْوَجُ إِلَى الأِنصَافِ مِنْ غَيْرِهِمْ، وَكُلٌّ فَأَعْذِرْ إِلَى الله تَعَالَى فِي تَأْدِيَةِ حَقِّهِ إِلَيهِ. وَتَعَهَّدْ أَهْلَ الْيُتْمِ وَذَوِي الرِّقَّةِ فِي السِّنِّ مِمَّنْ لاَ حِيلَةَ لَهُ، وَلاَ يَنْصِبُ لِلْمَسْأَلَةِ نَفْسَهُ، وَذلِكَ عَلَى الْوُلاَةِ ثَقِيلٌ، وَالْحَقُّ كُلُّهُ ثَقِيلٌ، وَقَدْ يُخَفِّفُهُ اللهُ عَلَى أَقْوَام طَلَبُوا الْعَاقِبَةَ فَصَبَرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ، وَوَثِقُوا بِصِدْقِ مَوْعُودِ الله لَهُمْ".

«Fear Allah, and bear Allah in mind with regard to the lowest class. These comprise of those who have few means, including the poor, the destitute, the penniless and the disabled, for among them are virtuous and respectable individuals as well. For the sake of Allah take care of your obligations towards them, for which He has made you responsible. Determine a share for them from the public funds, and a share from the crops of lands

taken as spoils of war by Islam in every region, because there is an equal share for the Muslims in the remotest regions as for the ones in close proximity. The rights of all these people have been placed in your custody. Therefore, a luxurious life should not keep you distanced from them. You cannot be excused for ignoring small matters because you were deciding big issues. Consequently, do not be unmindful of them nor turn your face away from them out of vanity.

Take care of the affairs of those of them who do not approach you, either because they have an unsightly appearance or are regarded as being lowly by the people. Appoint for them some trusted people who are God-fearing and humble. They should keep you informed of the condition of these people. Then deal with them with a sense of responsibility to Allah on the day when you will meet Him because, from among all the subjects, these people are the most deserving of being treated equitably; while in respect of all others as well, you should observe their rights, for you need to account for them to Allah.

Take care of the orphans and the aged who have neither means (of livelihood) nor are willing to beg. This weighs heavily on the officers. In fact every right weighs heavy, whereas, Allah lightens it for those who seek the hereafter and thus endure hardships, are patient, and place their trust in the promises given to them by Allah.»

In today's world, workers have managed to attain certain benefits, such as; decrease in working hours, increase in wages, receive damages at the time of dismissal, and establishment of the social insurances fund. It is better we know that firstly, these results have been obtained by the

persistent efforts of workers in the course of successive years. The legislative assemblies have neither paid attention to them of their own accord nor made efforts to improve their situation; rather, they have resisted them. Secondly, these laws are not comprehensive enough, and do not take into account many necessary cases. Thirdly, the elderly, orphans, destitute and children, who are not able to do any work, have not been taken into account by these laws and no solution has been found for their plight. However, in Imam Ali's ('a) Document of Instruction, firstly, laws have been devised by the legislator without the workers demanding them. Secondly, all needy individuals have been taken into account fully. Thirdly, the government considers it its obligation and responsibility to implement the law and delegates a group to locate the needy individuals.

Characteristics of a popular ruler

One of the special characteristics of the popular ruler is that he regards himself to be of the people and the people, of him. Thus, he is not willing to create a barrier between himself and the people; rather, he aims to live with the people, beside them.

This method, makes the people inclined towards the ruler and give him their support. It also renders opportunist forces and subversive factors incapable of making the ruler condescending towards the people, and in a position of confrontation. Imam Ali ('a) insists that he should always be in direct touch with the people and create conditions in which all strata of people are able to discuss their problems with the governor without any sort of formality and protocol, and in an atmosphere, free of

intimidation and terror. Thus, if any injustice has been done to them, they should disgrace the unjust person, expose his crime and bring the criminal to justice.

"وَاجْعلْ لِذَوِي الْحَاجَاتِ مِنْكَ قِسْماً تُفَرِّغُ لَهُمْ فِيهِ شَخْصَكَ، وَتَجْلِسُ لَهُمْ مَجْلِساً عَامّاً، فَتَتَواضَعُ فِيهِ لله الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ، وَتُقعِدُ عَنْهُمْ جُنْدَكَ وَأَعْوَانَكَ مِنْ أَحْرَاسِكَ وَشُرَطِكَ، حَتَّى يُكَلِّمَكَ مُتَكَلِّمُهُمْ غَيْرَ مُتَعْتِع، فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهﷺ يَقُولُ فِي غَيْرِ مَوْطِن: لَنْ تُقَدَّسَ أُمَّةٌ لاَ يُؤْخَذُ لِلضَّعِيفِ فِيهَا حَقُّهُ مِنَ الْقَوِيِّ غَيْرَ مُتَعْتِع. ثُمَّ احْتَمِلِ الْخُرْقَ مِنْهُمْ وَالْعِيَّ، وَنَحِّ عَنْكَ الضِّيقَ وَالأَنَفَ، يَبْسُطِ اللهُ عَلَيْكَ بَذلِكَ أَكْنَافَ رَحْمَتِهِ، وَيُوجِبُ لَكَ ثَوَابَ طَاعَتِهِ، وَأَعْطِ مَا أَعْطَيْتَ هَنِيئاً، وَامْنَعْ فِي إِجْمَال وَإِعْذَار".

«And set aside a time for people with grievances, in which you interact with them freely. Sit with them in common audience and feel humble therein, for the sake of Allah Who created you. Ask your soldiers and assistants to keep away, so that anybody who wishes to speak to you may do so without harboring fear and stammering; because I heard the Messenger of Allah (s) utter on more than one occasion that, "A nation, in which the right of the weak is not restored to them from the strong without fear and stammering, shall never become purified." Try to tolerate their awkwardness and their caustic approach and keep shortness of temper and selfishness away from yourself so that Allah spreads out the table of His Mercy for you on this account, and rewards you for being obedient of Him. Whatever you give away, give it away cheerfully and, if

for some reason, you want to refuse, do so with kindness and apology.»

Note carefully that if in an administration, this principle alone is implemented, would opportunists, subversive elements and initiators of corruption be able to commit vice and treachery? Would they be able to drive the people and the administration away from good deeds and towards moral corruption and vice? Would they be able to take undue advantage and compel officials to take unpopular decisions because of the ignorance of the people, and bring misery upon them by driving the people this way and that way because of their alienation from the authorities?

Key to success of authorities in executive tasks

The key to success in executive tasks lies hidden in two essential points:

1. It is quite clear that the high-ranking officials cannot perform all the relevant duties and they will inevitably delegate most of their tasks to their respective deputies. Of course, there are certain tasks that demand their direct intervention. To keep a check on the deputies, as well as perform his own direct tasks competently, it is necessary that he separate the ones having priority from the trivial and unimportant ones, and directly, quickly, meticulously and competently perform the tasks having priority, while delegating the less important ones to the deputies.

2. After the duties have been ascertained and the priorities made known, it is essential that for every job a suitable amount of time is considered, and the job of every day is

performed on the scheduled day, not put off for the next day.

”ثُمَّ أُمُورٌ مِنْ أُمُورِكَ لاَ بُدَّ لَكَ مِنْ مُبَاشَرَتِهَا: مِنْهَا إِجَابَةُ عُمَّالِكَ بِمَا يَعْيَا عَنْهُ كُتَّابُكَ، وَمِنْهَا إِصْدَارُ حَاجَاتِ النَّاسِ عِنْدَ وَرُودِهَا عَلَيْكَ مِمَّا تَحْرَجُ بِهِ صُدُورُ أَعْوَانِكَ. وَأَمْضِ لِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ عَمَلَهُ، فَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ يَوْمٍ مَا فِيهِ“.

«There are certain tasks which you cannot avoid performing yourself. For instance, one of these tasks is looking into the workings of your deputies in cases, which your secretariat is incapable of handling. Another is, attending to the needs of the people when your deputies feel they are incapable of attending to them quickly. For every day, allocate the job for that day, because the work of any day is meant for that particular day.»

Self-development is the best way of preventing pragmatism

In Islam, any charitable and useful work is an act of worship if it is accompanied with sincere divine motive. Based on this premise, all tasks performed by the executive authorities shall be acts of worship if the motives are sincere and for the sake of God. In order that officials are not overcome by pragmatism and become neglectful of their obligatory acts of worship, Imam Ali (‘a) orders Malik to devote the best part of his time to worship and perform the obligatory daily prayers - that are clear manifestations of the ascent of man towards the Source of Existence-fully, without any defect or deficiency, and with all his ability and energy, and make it his topmost priority:

"وَاجْعَلْ لِنَفْسِكَ فِيما بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الله تعالى أَفْضَلَ تِلْكَ الْمَوَاقِيتِ، وَأَجْزَلَ تِلْكَ الأَقْسَامِ، وَإِنْ كَانَتْ كُلُّهَا لله إِذَا صَلَحَتْ فيهَا النِّيَّةُ، وَسَلِمَتْ مِنْهَا الرَّعِيَّةُ. وَلْيَكُنْ فِي خَاصَّةِ مَا تُخْلِصُ لله بِهِ دِينَكَ: إِقَامَةُ فَرَائِضِهِ الَّتي هِيَ لَهُ خَاصَّةً، فَأَعْطِ اللهَ مِن بَدَنِكَ فِي لَيْلِكَ وَنَهَارِكَ، وَوَفِّ مَا تَقَرَّبْتَ بِهِ إِلَى الله مِنْ ذلِكَ كَاملاً غَيْرَ مَثْلُوم وَلاَ مَنْقُوص، بَالِغاً مِنْ بَدَنِكَ مَا بَلَغَ. وَإِذَا قُمْتَ فِي صلاَتِكَ لِلنَّاس، فَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مُنَفِّراً وَلاَ مُضَيِّعاً، فَإِنَّ فِي النَّاس مَنْ بِهِ الْعِلَّةُ وَلَهُ الْحَاجَةُ. وَقَدْ سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ الله ﷺ حِينَ وَجَّهَنِي إِلَى الَيمن كَيْفَ أُصَلِّي بِهِمْ؟ فَقَالَ: "صَلِّ بِهِمْ كَصَلاَةِ أَضْعَفِهِمْ، وَكُنْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيماً".

«Allocate the best time and the most opportune moment to worship (and self-purification) even though all the tasks that you perform are for God, provided they are with pure and sincere intentions and for the good of the people.

The Divine obligations that are solely for the sake of God must be performed at specific times. Thus, submit your heart and soul during the day and night to Him; and perform the obligations that are means of proximity to God befittingly and sufficiently, even though it involves physical labor on your part and wears away your body.

When you stand to lead the congregation prayers for the people, neither prolong the obligatory prayers to such an extent that it tires the people nor recite it so hastily that you mar it. This is because, among those that stand to perform the prayers, are persons who may be suffering from ailments or have to go to work. When the Prophet of

God (s) sent me to Yemen I asked him in what manner I should recite the obligatory prayers for them and he replied: “Perform the prayer with them as if you are performing it with the weakest of them; and be compassionate with the believers! »

In this statement, despite all the care and diligence, with the phrase “بالِغاً مِنْ بَدَنِكَ مَا بَلَغَ” which has been considered in case of an individual act of worship in solitude, in the congregation prayer, observance of weaknesses and infirmities of the congregation is regarded as a principle. This principle is due to the fact that Islam gives particular importance to prayer in congregation and presence of the people in a unified gathering, and in accordance with this basis, assigns additional reward for participation in congregational and Friday prayers. All of these are aimed at sustaining the continuous active involvement of Muslims in day to day affairs and protect them from dispersing, disuniting, and monasticism.

Fruit of being with people and evil of alienation from them

A popular ruler is always with the people and does not create a barrier between himself and the people. Imam Ali (‘a) discusses the fruits and critical results of being with the people as below:

”وَأَمَّا بَعْدَ هذا، فَلاَ تُطَوِّلَنَّ احْتِجَابَكَ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِكَ، فَإِنَّ احْتِجَابَ الْوُلاَةِ عَنِ الرَّعِيَّةِ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الضّيقِ، وَقِلَّةُ عِلْمٍ بِالأُمُورِ، وَالاْحْتِجَابُ مِنْهُمْ يَقْطَعُ عَنْهُمْ عِلْمَ مَا احْتَجَبُوا دونَهُ فَيَصْغُرُ عِندَهُمْ الْكَبِيرُ، وَيَعْظَمُ الصَّغِيرُ، وَيَقْبُحُ

الْحَسَنُ، وَيَحْسُنُ الْقَبِيحُ، وَيُشَابُ الْحَقُّ بِالْبَاطِلِ، وَإِنَّمَا الْوَالِي بَشَرٌ لاَ يَعْرِفُ مَا تَوَارَى عَنْهُ النَّاسُ بِهِ مِنَ الأُمُورِ، وَلَيْسَتْ عَلَى الْحَقِّ سِمَاتٌ تُعْرَفُ بِهَا ضُرُوبُ الصِّدْقِ مِنَ الْكَذِبِ، وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتَ أَحَدُ رَجُلَيْنِ: إِمَّا امْرُؤٌ سَخَتْ نَفْسُكَ بِالْبَذْلِ فِي الْحَقِّ، فَفِيمَ احْتِجَابُكَ مِنْ وَاجِبِ حَقٍّ تُعْطِيهِ، أَوْ فِعْل كَرِيم تُسْدِيهِ، أَوْ مُبْتَلَىً بِالْمَنعِ، فَمَا أَسْرَعَ كَفَّ النَّاس عَنْ مَسْأَلَتِكَ إِذَا أَيِسُوا مِنْ بَذْلِكَ! مَعَ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَ حَاجَاتِ النَّاس إِلَيْكَ [مـ] ما لاَ مَؤُونَةَ فِيهِ عَلَيْكَ، مِنْ شَكَاةِ مَظْلِمَة، أَوْ طَلَبِ إِنْصاف فِي مُعَامَلَة".

«So, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for long, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a sort of bottleneck (for himself or the people) and is ignorance of their affairs. Moreover, alienation from them also prevents the people from knowing what is happening in other places, and consequently, it causes that which is significant to appear insignificant in their view and the insignificant to appear significant, the good to appear ugly and the ugly to appear good; and truth blends with falsehood. The governor is a human being and cannot find out the things that people conceal from him, because truth does not have any hallmark by which to distinguish it from falsehood.

You can possess either of two attitudes. Either you are a man who is generous in the way of Truth, so, why hide yourself from the obligatory truth that you dispense with and the good work that you perform? Or else, you are a miserly person (and do no good to the people), in which case, people will soon give up hope knowing that they cannot expect to be treated generously by you.

Furthermore, most of the people's needs are things that do not cost you to fulfill them. Their needs are either complaints against the injustices done to them, or, they seek your justice and impartiality in transactions or matters.»

The following points have been taken into consideration:

1. There are two ways by which the ruler can obtain information: the first one is by keeping himself informed of the state affairs by mobilizing overt and covert manpower and through other channels; the second way is by occasionally communicating directly with the people and gaining information of the events from them. The best way is direct communication with the people. This is due to the fact that on seeing the governor the people shall speak out the truth and expose the realities and this, itself, shall be a means by which the ruler can evaluate the gathered information correctly and come to conclusions that conform with reality.

2. Recognition of right from wrong is not possible without coming face to face with the thoughts of people. This is because human beings will not relate issues as they are to informants; however, when they come face to face with the ruler, because of the confidence they have in him, they shall speak out on issues and describe the realities as they exist.

The objective is to carry out the Commandments of God

According to the Islamic point of view, the objective of administration is implementation of the commandments of God and the ruler is regarded as the trustee and

guardian of people's rights. For this reason, Imam Ali ('a) in a letter to the governor of the state of Azerbaijan writes:

"وَإِنَّ عَمَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَكَ بِطُعْمَة، وَلكِنَّهُ فِي عُنُقِكَ أَمَانةٌ، وَأَنْتَ مُسْتَرْعىً لِمَنْ فَوْقَكَ، لَيْسَ لَكَ أَنْ تَفتَاتَ فِي رَعِيَّة".

«Your governance is not a big hunting ground for you; rather, it is a trust that has been placed round your neck. Your superiors want you to safeguard and protect the rights of the people; it is not worthy of you to act despotically as you please with the people.»[1]

This Islamic principle clarifies both the duty of the ruler as well as the duty of his relatives and inner circle. The ruler's duty is that he should not imagine administration as a prey and pursue accumulation of worldly wealth; rather, his sole objective should be implementation of God's commandments. The relatives of the ruler are bound by duty not to regard the ruler as a means of misappropriation and use his position to bully and plunder. However, if they do make such moves, the ruler, in line with the commandment of Islam, has a duty to safeguard social justice and support the rights of the downtrodden. He must deal firmly with their improper inclinations and, by eradicating the roots of misappropriating elements, prevent injustice, despotism, embezzlement, and inequity committed by such hangers on.

1. **Nahj al-Balaghah** of Fayz al-Islam, Letter no. 5.

" ثُمَّ إِنَّ لِلْوَالِي خَاصَّةً وبِطَانَةً، فِيهِمُ اسْتِئْثَارٌ وَتَطَاوُلٌ، وَقِلَّةُ إِنْصَاف فِي مُعَامَلَة، فَاحْسِمْ مَادَّةَ أُولئِكَ بِقَطْعِ أَسْبَابِ تِلْكَ الأَحْوَالِ، وَلاَ تُقْطِعَنَّ لاَحَد مِنْ حَاشِيَتِكَ وَحَامَّتِكَ قَطِيعةً، وَلاَ يَطْمَعَنَّ مِنْكَ فِي اعْتِقَادِ عُقْدَة، تَضُرُّ بِمَنْ يَلِيهَا مِنَ النَّاس، فِي شِرْب أَوْ عَمَل مُشْتَرَك، يَحْمِلُونَ مَؤُونَتَهُ عَلَى غَيْرِهِمْ، فَيَكُونَ مَهْنَأُ ذلِكَ لَهُمْ دُونَكَ، وَعَيْبُهُ عَلَيْكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ."

«Similarly, the ruler has associates and relatives who are habituated to high-handedness, obstinacy, misappropriation (of people's property) and unfairness in transacting with them. You should exterminate their roots by destroying the causes of those despicable actions!

And do not grant any landed properties to your inner circle of associates and relatives; and on no account permit them (associates and relatives) to take possession of any farmland so that with their authority over that farmland, they inflict losses on the neighbors (such as violating their watering rights or imposing on them tasks that need to be undertaken jointly), and impose the expenses of their cultivable lands on the rural inhabitants. In this case, the benefit shall be theirs, while the ignominy and rebuke in this world as well as the hereafter shall be yours.»

In these phrases His Holiness points to some of the means and factors of misappropriation. He makes it quite clear how the ruler's relatives and hangers on plunder others' properties on various pretexts; how they forcefully take over the landed properties and irrigation canals of the

weaker strata when they lie in proximity to theirs, and how they resort to evasive tactics when it comes to performing their part of joint obligations.

Equality vis-à-vis the law

One of the important laws of Islam is equality and equity of all individuals vis-à-vis the law. Based on this principle, the divine legislator has determined equal punishment for any crime committed by all individuals, without considering their position, personality and social standing, friendship and family associations. All shall be handed equal punishment for the same crime committed and no issue shall hinder equitable implementation of the law.

In today's world, although so-called advanced countries claim that their laws are implemented equally for all societal classes, however, in practice, there is no performance guarantee for the implementation of this equality and equity. The 'Watergate' scandal, which was one of the dirtiest and most shameful of crimes in the world of today, became a plaything in the hands of Gerald Ford, and the criminal file of Mr. Nixon was closed! However, in Islam, when the foremost leader of the Shiites, Imam Ali ('a), noticed that his battle armor had been stolen, and found the thief and saw the stolen armor in his possession with his own eyes, he did not use his power in any way; rather, like an ordinary citizen he referred the case to the Islamic judge and filed a petition for restoration of what rightfully belonged to him. Furthermore, when he saw the judge showing more respect to him than to the thief and did not observe justice in his approach towards them, he became angry and left

the court room!! By this approach he literally proved Sayyid Qarashi's claim to equality with the black slave; and with this viewpoint addressed Malik al-Ashtar, stating:

"وَأَلْزِمِ الْحَقَّ مَنْ لَزِمَهُ مِنَ الْقَرِيبِ وَالْبَعِيدِ، وَكُنْ فِي ذلِكَ صَابِراً مُحْتَسِباً، وَاقِعاً ذلِكَ مِنْ قَرَابَتِكَ خَاصَّتِكَ حَيْثُ وَقَعَ، وَابْتَغِ عَاقِبَتَهُ بِمَا يَثْقُلُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهُ، فَإِنَّ مَغَبَّةَ ذلِكَ مَحْمُودَةٌ".

«Always carry out justice and equity with regard to those close to you and far away from you, and be patient and steadfast in this path; and act for the sake of God even though implementing justice to your relatives and close associates brings losses. And always think of the aftermath of truth, for the conclusion of truth is praiseworthy.»

Principled explanation of Issues

Islam recognizes reciprocal trust between the people and the officials as a critical administrative pillar, and opines that the ruler and people shall not be able to continue with their existence without such a trust. In the same way that it is necessary for the ruler to trust the people and show goodwill to them, it is necessary for the people to trust the ruler and have a good opinion of him. Thus, whenever an issue becomes ambiguous for the people and questions are raised surrounding dismissals, appointments and contracts etc…the ruler has a duty to keep the people informed of the state of affairs and through principled and rational explanations, clarify the misgivings of the nation of Islam, attract their trust and remove their doubts:

"وَإِنْ ظَنَّتِ الرَّعِيَّةُ بِكَ حَيْفاً، فَأَصْحِرْ لَهُمْ بِعُذْرِكَ، وَاعْدِلْ عَنكَ ظُنُونَهُمْ بِإِصْحَارِكَ، فَإِنَّ فِي ذلِكَ رِيَاضَةً مِنْكَ لِنَفْسِكَ، وَرِفْقاً بِرَعِيَّتِكَ، وَإِعْذَاراً تَبْلُغُ فِيه حَاجَتَكَ مِنْ تَقْوِيمِهِمْ عَلَى الْحَقِّ".

«If the people suspect you of high-handedness, clarify your position and remove the misgivings from their minds with your clarification and apology; because this style would be an exercise in self-control for yourself and a favor and compassion for the subjects; and this apologizing shall be a means by which you can teach them truth and justice and make them firm followers of the truth.»

The critical results of offering rational and principled explanation of issues are:

1. A leader who regards himself obliged to explain issues to the people has, in fact, accepted the superiority and primacy of the people in relation to himself. This approach shall cause the governor to attain self-control, an exercise in self-discipline, and be able to combat his own evil and carnal desires, as well as those of others.

2. Principled explanation of issues causes people to become familiar with the truth and consider themselves obliged to observe truth and justice and be pleased with its implementation.

Peaceful life

The divine creed of Islam calls human beings more and more for peaceful life and it raises the slogan "peace is

charity” as one of its highest objectives. The holy Qur’an in this regard reads:

﴿وَإِن جَنَحُواْ لِلسَّلۡمِ فَٱجۡنَحۡ لَهَا﴾

“And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it.”[1]

In yet another verse, the Qur’an commands believers to establish general and public peace:

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱدۡخُلُواْ فِي ٱلسِّلۡمِ كَآفَّةٗ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُواْ خُطُوَٰتِ ٱلشَّيۡطَٰنِۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَكُمۡ عَدُوّٞ مُّبِينٞ﴾

“O believers, enter the peace (Islam), all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan for he is a manifest foe to you.”[2]

The two above verses show that Islam’s external and domestic policies are established on the principle of peaceful coexistence. Islam always and in all places seeks to establish peace and security in the world.

Is peace acceptable to Islam in all places and in all circumstances and without preconditions? According to the unanimous opinion of all Shiite jurisprudents the basic condition for acceptance of peace is that the compromise is in favor of Islam and for the benefit of Muslims. If peace is harmful for Islam and weakens Muslims, acceptance of such an offer of peace is not permissible. It is on this basis that Imam Ali (‘a) also states:

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1. *Surat al-Anfal: 61.*
2. *Surat al-Baqarah: 208.*

"وَلاَ تَدْفَعَنَّ صُلْحاً دَعَاكَ إِلَيْهِ عَدُوُّ كَ لله فِيهِ رِضىً، فإنَّ فِي الصُّلْحِ دَعَةً لِجُنُودِكَ، وَرَاحَةً مِنْ هُمُومِكَ، وأَمْناً لِبِلاَدِكَ، وَلَكِن الْحَذَرَ كُلَّ الْحَذَرِ مِنْ عَدُوِّكِ بَعْدَ صُلْحِهِ، فَإِنَّ الْعَدُوَّ رُبَّمَا قَارَبَ لِيَتَغَفَّلَ، فَخُذْ بِالْحَزْمِ، وَاتَّهِمْ فِي ذلِكَ حُسْنَ الظَّنِّ".

«Do not reject the enemy's offer of a peace that earns the consent of God; because peace results in comfort for the army, peace of mind for you, and security for the state. However, after establishing peace and reconciliation, be extremely vigilant and careful for, often, the enemy's offers of peace are aimed at deceiving the opposite party. Therefore, it is better that you do not throw caution to the wind and be optimistic about this reconciliation.»

Fulfilling contracts

From Islam's point of view, fulfilling contracts and commitments is a supreme human virtue. The glorious Qur'an and works of the Immaculate Imams ('a)state that fulfilling contracts is regarded as an essential condition of faith, while departure from it is tantamount to irreligion and faithlessness. [1]

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1. One day Abu Malik, Imam Sajjad's ('a) companion, stated to His Holiness:
"O, Son of the Prophet of God ('a), what are all the conditions of religion and with what conditions shall a person become devoted to the Divine religion?"The Imam stated: "The entire conditions of religion are summarized in three things: first, speaking the truth; second, judging fairly; and third, fulfilling contracts."

Muslims are obliged to observe this principle not only with one another but strangers and unbelievers, as well.

"وَإِنْ أَعْطَيْتَ، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ فَرَائِضِ الله عزوجلّ شَيْءٌ النَّاسُ أَشدُّ عَلَيْهِ اجْتِماعاً، مَعَ تَفْرِيقِ أَهْوَائِهِمْ، وَتَشْتِيتِ آرَائِهِمْ، مِنَ تَعْظِيمِ الْوَفَاءِ بِالْعُهُودِ، وَقَدْ لَزِمَ ذلِكَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ فِيما بَيْنَهُمْ دُونَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ لِمَا اسْتَوْبَلُوا مِنْ عَوَاقِبِ الْغَدْرِ، فَلاَ تَغْدِرَنَّ بِذِمَّتِكَ، وَلاَ تَخِيسَنَّ بَعَهْدِكَ، وَلاَ تَخْتِلَنَّ عَدُوَّكَ، فَإِنَّهُ لاَ يَجْتَرِىءُ عَلَى الله إِلاَّ جَاهِلٌ شَقِيٌّ. وَقَدْ جَعَلَ اللهُ عَهْدَهُ وَذِمَّتَهُ أَمْناً أَفْضَاهُ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ بِرَحْمَتِهِ، وَحَرِيماً يَسْكُنُونَ إِلَى مَنَعَتِهِ،يَسْتَفِيضُونَ إِلَى جِوَارِهِ، فَلاَ إِدْغَالَ، وَلاَ مُدَالَسَةَ، وَلاَ خِدَاعَ فِيهِ، وَلاَ تَعْقِدْ عَقْداً تَجُوزُ فِيهِ الْعِلَلُ، وَلاَ تُعَوِّلَنَّ عَلَى لَحْنِ القَوْلِ بَعْدَ التَّأْكِيدِ وَالتَّوْثِقَةِ، وَلاَ يَدْعُوَنَّكَ ضِيقُ أَمْرٍ لَزِمَكَ فِيهِ عَهْدُ الله، إِلَى طَلَبِ انْفِسَاخِهِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ، فَإِنَّ صَبْرَكَ عَلَى ضِيقٍ تَرْجُو انْفِرَاجَهُ وَفَضْلَ عَاقِبَتِهِ، خَيْرٌ مِنْ غَدْرٍ تَخَافُ تَبِعَتَهُ، وَأَنْ تُحِيطَ بِكَ مِنَ الله فِيهِ طَلِبَةٌ، لاَتَسْتَقِيلُ فِيهَا دُنْيَاكَ وَلاَ آخِرَتَكَ".

«If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or, enter into a pledge with him, then fulfill your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully. Place yourself as a shield against whatever you have pledged because, among the obligations of Allah, there is nothing on which people are more strongly united, despite the difference of their ideas and variation of their views, than respect for fulfilling pledges. Besides Muslims, even unbelievers have abided by agreements because they

realized the dangers which would come in the wake of violation. Therefore, do not deceive your enemy, because no one can offend Allah save the ignorant and the wicked. Allah made His agreement and pledged security, which He has spread over His creatures through His mercy, and an asylum, in which they stay in His protection and seek the benefit of nearness to Him. Therefore, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it.

Do not enter into an agreement which may admit of different interpretations and do not change the interpretation of vague words[1] *after the conclusion and*

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1. Whenever a word contains two meanings and the person who utters the words intends the second meaning of the word, this type of speech is called *Tawriyeh* (dissimulation).
In history books we read that one of the loyal companions of His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (‘a) was forcibly brought to the palace of Hajjaj Bin Yusuf. Hajjaj asked him: “What is your opinion about me?” He replied: “انت قاسط عادل” (you are a just person). After the meeting concluded, Hajjaj asked his companions: “What do you think of Sa’id’s opinion?” they said: “he spoke nothing except good and virtue about you.”Hajjaj replied that on the contrary Sa’id’s meant to slander him and referred to a verse of the glorious Qur’an to support his view and by calling him ‘عادل’ he meant ‘عدول’ or one who deviates from the truth.
In another instance it is mentioned that during his reign, the Abbasid caliph, Harun Ar-Rashid, ordered the massacre of all men of the Baramakah clan. A Baramakah woman came to him and asked for assistance and he ordered that she be given assistance. After receiving the assistance the woman, addressing Harun, said: “May God enhance your eyesight and make you happy because of the assistance you have given me. You have decreed on the basis of justice and equity”. Haroun

confirmation (of the agreement). If an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification, because the bearing of hardships, from which you expect relief and a handsome result, is better than a violation whose consequence you fear, and you should fear that you will be called upon by Allah to account for it, and you will not be able to seek forgiveness for it in this world or the next.»

The approach of the prophets was also based on this premise and we read concerning the circumstances of His Holiness Ishmael (‘a):

“He made a promise to meet a person outside the city gates of Mecca in a neighborhood, called *Safah*, and waited for long for him to come, but that man did not show up. The people of Mecca enquired about him and did not know the whereabouts of his location until a passerby came to him and said: ‘O, Prophet of God, after leaving you I became weak and infirm’. Ishmael stated: ‘I have made a pledge to meet so and so person at this location and I shall not leave this place till he arrives.” People rushed towards that man and said: “O enemy of

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asked: “Which clan do you belong to?”She replied: “From the descendants of Baramakah, whose men you ordered to be killed.” After the woman had departed, Haroun said: “This woman has insulted me because, what she meant by the word ‘اقر’ was becoming inactive (meaning that the eyes should stop blinking and become static or, in other words, he should become blind). What she implied by using the word ‘فرحک‘ refers to the verse in the Qur’an that was revealed about this material world, and the word ‘عدل’ is derived from the word ‘‘عدول” or deviation from the truth.”

God, you make a pledge with the Prophet of God and break it?" The man realized his mistake and came up to Ishmael (‘a) and said: "O Prophet of God, pardon me, I forgot this promise."

After narrating this tale, Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) stated: "Because of this, Almighty God has named His Holiness, Ishmael (‘a), in the Qur'an as "the one true to his promise."[1]

On another occasion, on the attitude of the Prophet of God (s), Imam Sadiq (‘a) states: "The Prophet of God (‘a) agreed to meet a person and sit on a rock until the man arrived. He went away and the sun rose to its peak at noon and the weather became hot. The companions of His Holiness (s) argued: 'What difference would it make if you took shelter from the sun and stood in the shade?" He replied: 'I promised to meet him at this point, and I shall wait for him right here until the Day of Resurrection!'

Man is inherently social and seeks to interact with others. Social living necessitates that every human being fulfill his contracts and confront every factor that causes a breach of contract and the breaking of a pledge, otherwise, the social order shall disintegrate. The world's legal experts have made the subject of 'contractual agreements' one of the major topics of discussion and opine that establishing international agreements is necessary for promoting understanding, cooperation and peaceful coexistence. Based on this argument, in the course of his prophetic mission, the Prophet of

1. **Bihar al-Anwar**, vol. 15, p. 144.

God (s) signed treaties with the polytheists, Christians, people of the scriptures and Arab tribes.

Impossible to establish a government on the basis of tyranny and bloodshed

Despite the governments of the east and the west, Islam does not consider it possible to install a government by means of bloodshed and tyranny and believes that bloodshed weakens the foundations of the government. This reveals Islam's firm conviction in the dignity of man. Islam considers the honor and dignity of human beings to be such that it regards killing an individual to be tantamount to killing all mankind, while giving life to an individual tantamount to giving life to all humanity. On this subject the Qur'an states:

﴿مَن قَتَلَ نَفۡسَۢا بِغَيۡرِ نَفۡسٍ أَوۡ فَسَادٖ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعٗا وَمَنۡ أَحۡيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَآ أَحۡيَا ٱلنَّاسَ جَمِيعٗا﴾

"That whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption done in the land, shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether."[1]

The Qur'an's states the fact that a person, who is prepared to put an end to the life of a human being by slaying him without reason, is indeed opposed to the creation of humanity. He hates all human beings and slaying so-and-so makes no difference to him. The person who kills so-

1. *Surat al-Ma'idah: 32.*

and-so without reason does not desist from shedding the blood of so-and-so as well, and if he could, he would kill all of mankind. This statement of the Qur'an has been embodied in the words of Imam Ali Bin Abu Talib ('a):

"إِيَّاكَ وَالدِّمَاءَ وَسَفْكَهَا بِغَيْرِ حِلِّهَا، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَدْعَى لِنِقْمَة، وَلاَ أَعْظَمَ لِتَبِعَة، وَلاَ أَحْرَى بِزَوَالِ نِعْمَة، وَانْقِطَاعِ مُدَّة، مِنْ سَفْكِ الدِّمَاءِ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّهَا، وَاللهُ سُبْحَانَهُ مُبْتَدِىءٌ بِالْحُكْمِ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ، فِيمَا تَسَافَكُوا مِنَ الدِّمَاءِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامةِ، فَلاَ تُقَوِّيَنَّ سُلْطَانَكَ بِسَفْكِ دَم حَرَام، فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ مِمَّا يُضْعِفُهُ وَيُوهِنُهُ، بَلْ يُزِيلُهُ وَيَنْقُلُهُ، وَلاَ عُذْرَ لَكَ عِنْدَ اللهِ وَلاَ عِنْدِي فِي قَتْلِ الْعَمدِ، لاَِنَّ فِيهِ قَوَدَ الْبَدَنِ، وَإِنِ ابْتُلِيتَ بِخَطَإٍ وَأَفْرَطَ عَلَيْكَ سَوْطُكَ أَوْ سَيْفُكَ أَوْ يَدُكَ بِعُقُوبَة، فَإِنَّ فِي الْوَكْزَةِ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا مَقْتَلَةً، فَلاَ تَطْمَحَنَّ بِكَ نَخْوَةُ سُلْطَانِكَ عَنْ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إِلَى أَوْلِيَاءِ الْمَقْتُول حَقَّهُمْ".

«You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting of Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequence, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short of a lifespan, than the shedding of innocent blood. On the Day of Judgment, Allah the Glorified, will commence giving His judgment to the people with the cases of bloodshed committed by them. Therefore, do not strengthen your authority by shedding prohibited blood, because this will weaken and lower the authority, moreover, destroy it, and transfer it to another.

You have no excuse to offer to Allah or to me for voluntary homicide, because the punishment for it is

slaying. However, if you have committed it by mistake, and your whip, your sword, or your hand commits an excess in giving punishment against your will and intention, as sometimes, even dealing a blow with the fist or a smaller stroke can cause death; in this case you should not be overcome by arrogance because of your authority, and should not refuse to pay the blood money to the next of kin of the slain person.»

Two points become clear from the above words of Imam Ali (‘a):

1. The greatest positive effect of unjustified blood shedding is decline of power as well as destruction of government and administration. The inauspicious tyrannical Pahlavi monarchy is the best testimony to this Alawite perspective. The entire Islamic nation of Iran witnessed how the immoral Pahlavi dynasty was consigned to the garbage dump of history because of unjustified bloodshed, and only ignominy and hatred remained for the dynasty.

2. The false claimants of human rights do not regard retaliation[1] to be permissible, under whose implementation peaceful coexistence is actualized, . They say retaliation is not compatible with human rights and attempt to make the world believe that human rights are not observed in Islamic Iran.

What rights and what human beings are they talking about? Does a person who arms himself and attacks innocent people and sheds the blood of tens of human

1.”*In (the law of) retaliation there is life for you, men of understanding.”* (*Surat al-Baqarah: 179*).

beings – both men and women, young and aged – deserve to be called a human being? Does a person who plants a bomb on the street to explode and sets a public bus carrying individuals from the deprived strata of society ablaze, and burn to ashes a number of the downtrodden, including young and innocent children, possess human rights? If we regard a person who ruthlessly massacres and burns innocent people to death to be 'human', then what about the human rights of those innocent victims who are obliterated in the fire of their fury? Is the beastly action of such a merciless and criminal creature not savage and inhuman? Don't his victims have human value and rights or, is it that only the ruthless killer enjoys the superpowers' blessings of human rights? And should the divine administration of Islam accord respect to killers of innocent individuals? Should it serve them, take care of them, offer them psychiatric and nursing services, a warm bed to sleep on, give them free food and clothing, reward them in retaliation for their crimes and respect and praise them with regard to their human rights, and regard the life, property, honor and blood of the victims to be so worthless as to be consigned to memory?!

Consequently, by drawing inspiration from the glorious Qur'an, Imam Ali ('a) reckons implementation of 'retaliation' to be necessary, and does not spare even the closest of his companions (Malik al-Ashtar).

Treatment of self-admiration and narcissism

Another important ethical issue that acquires a societal aspect with reference to administrators and officials is self-glorification, selfishness and self-centeredness.

How can man be narcissistic and egocentric who accepts that, “There is no power save the power of God?”

Thus the best method of treating arrogance for man is, to focus his attention on his relationship with God and assesses his insignificance in relation to the Self-Sufficient, and seeing so much poverty, insignificance and destitution, conclude whether talking of self-centeredness and self-admiration is not foolish and silly? After all hasn’t God stated that pride and greatness is His exclusively? Is it not that the haughty man wants to imagine himself at a level similar to God? And is this not latent polytheism?!

It is for this reason that Imam Ali (‘a) is compelled to caution Malik of the ominous fate of arrogance:

" وَإِيَّاكَ وَالإعْجَابَ بِنَفْسِكَ، وَالثِّقَةَ بِمَا يُعْجِبُكَ مِنْهَا، وَحُبَّ الإطْرَاءِ، فَإِنَّ ذلِكَ مِنْ أَوْثَقِ فُرَصِ الشَّيْطَانِ فِي نَفْسِهِ، لِيَمْحَقَ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ إِحْسَانِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ. وَإِيَّاكَ وَالْمَنَّ عَلَى رَعِيَّتِكَ بِإِحْسَانِكَ، أَوِ التَّزَيُّدَ فِيمَا كَانَ مِنْ فِعْلِكَ، أَوْ أَنْ تَعِدَهُمْ فَتُتْبِعَ مَوْعِدَكَ بِخُلْفِكَ، فَإِنَّ الْمَنَّ يُبْطِلُ الإحْسَانَ، وَالتَّزَيُّدَ يَذْهَبُ بِنُورِ الْحَقِّ، وَالخُلْفَ يُوجِبُ الْمَقْتَ عِنْدَالله وَالنَّاس، قَالَ اللهُ سبحانه:﴿ كَبُرَ مَقْتاً عِنْدَ الله أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لاَ تَفْعَلُونَ﴾".

«You should avoid self-admiration and adulation of what appears good within you, as well as, exaggerated praise and flattery, because this is one of the best opportunities for Satan to obliterate the good deeds of the virtuous.

Avoid reminding your subjects of their indebtedness to you for having done a favor to them, or make them praise

you excessively for a job you have done for them, or make promises and break them, because reminding them of indebtedness for a good done destroys the good and the reward; exaggerated self-praise takes away the light of truth, and breaking promises earns the wrath and anger of Allah and the people. Allah the Glorified says: "Most hateful is to Allah that you say what you do not.»

After stating the ugliness of arrogance, His Holiness has referred to three other fundamental topics as well:

First: Indebtedness

Islam condemns the act of reminding somebody of their indebtedness for a favor done is–whether it is indebtedness of people to people or indebtedness of the government to the people. This is firstly, because charity and giving assistance to others is to deliver people from their miserable living conditions and provide them with material essentials, and ease their tensions. However, if there is a reminder of indebtedness in charity, then a heavier blow has been dealt to the morale of the poor. Secondly, anything that the government provides in the form of services is performance of duty and does not need gratitude. Thirdly, charity and munificence need to have a divine aspect to them, and reminding of indebtedness shows that the deed has not been for the sake of God. Fourthly, Almighty God, Who is the Absolute Ruler and Holder of all powers and forces, does not remind human beings of their indebtedness for provision of all the blessings and bounties of existence He has bestowed, (save for providing the blessings of the Prophet of Allah – salutations of God be upon him and his household – and, the blessing of Islam). Thus, a person who reminds

somebody of his indebtedness for a favor he has done to him, regards himself to be independent and self-sufficient, and considers the bounty to belong to him, whereas, according to the decree 'There is no power save the Power of God', His is the ownership of all existence and from Him it all originates (Surely we belong to God and to Him we return).

Second: breaking of a promise

In Islam, breaking a promise is tantamount to irreligiousness and faithlessness. The Qur'an states: *"Very hateful is it to God that you say what you do not."* If a government official makes a promise and then breaks it, in addition to inviting the wrath of God, the government shall bear the loss for this breach of contract. Thus, it is appropriate that the officials make promises which they can keep, and desist from making promises which they might possibly breach.

Third: exaggerated statements

Truth has a unique radiance and luminosity. A person who lies, suffers subconsciously from pangs of conscience and lives in deceit, whereas, a truthful person enjoys spiritual calm. It is not proper for an Islamic government to exaggerate its accomplishments and mention more than what it has accomplished because, on seeing the actual performance, if they sense exaggeration and hyperbole, they regard the officials as unreliable.

Successful decision-making

The success of government officials' lies in their decisiveness. If the decision is timely, the officials are

successful and triumphant, while if it is untimely and removed from reality, they are unsuccessful and unproductive. Based on this premise, the official should take the appropriate decision without the least hesitation and delay.

"إِيَّاكَ وَالْعَجَلَةَ بِالأُمُورِ قَبْلَ أَوَانِهَا، أَوِ التَّسَاقُطَ فِيهَا عِنْدَ إِمْكَانِهَا، أَوِ اللَّجَاجَةَ فِيهَا إِذا تَنَكَّرَتْ، أَوِ الْوَهْنَ عَنْهَا إِذَا اسْتَوْضَحَتْ، فَضَعْ كُلَّ أَمْرٍ مَوْضِعَهُ، وَأَوْقِعْ كُلَّ عَمَلٍ مَوْقِعَهُ".

«Avoid haste in matters before their due time! If it becomes possible to perform the task, do not delay! In case the field of work is not known, do not be insistent! And when the affairs are clear, avoid procrastinating and delaying! Assign every affair its proper place and perform every task punctually.»

If we take a close look at the five obligatory daily prayers, we shall see that time is of special importance because many conditions have been subordinated to time. For instance, if there is no water available, we can perform 'Tayammum' (ablution with dust or sand) and recite our prayer – albeit, within the specified time and not outside it. The same applies for other acts of worship; such as, the 'Hajj' pilgrimage, (that needs to be performed in its own specified period); and fasting, (that is performed only in the blessed month of Ramadan). These religious regulations reveal that punctuality is of special importance and disregard for it shall lead to substantial loss and damage.

On this subject, Imam Hasan al-Askary ('a) states:

"Do not be hasty in picking a fruit that is unripe, for you shall benefit from it when it has ripened; and do not hasten to secure your needs before their due time, for it causes restlessness and anxiety and makes you suffer from despair."[1]

Remembrance of the hereafter controls carnal desires

We know that the world of the hereafter is one of reaping what we have sown in this world, and the manifestation of human traits and behavior. If a person, or ruler in power, knows and believes that any sort of deviation to gratify vain desires, as well as, any excess and rebellion will cause downfall and corruption and only lead to suffering in this life, and obliteration and hell in the hereafter, he will try to control his vain desires and act in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Islam:

" وَإِيَّاكَ وَالاْسْتِئْثَارَ بِمَا النَّاسُ فِيهِ أُسْوَةٌ، وَالتَّغَابِيَ عَمَّا تُعْنَى بِهِ مِمَّا قَدْ وَضَحَ لِلْعُيُونِ، فَإِنَّهُ مَأْخُوذٌ مِنْكَ لِغَيْرِكَ، وَعَمَّا قَلِيل تَنْكَشِفُ عَنْكَ أَغْطِيَةُ الأُمُورِ، وَيُنْتَصَفُ مِنْكَ لِلْمَظْلُومِ، امْلِكْ حَمِيَّةَ أَنْفِكَ، وَسَوْرَةَ حَدِّكَ ، وَسَطْوَةَ يَدِكَ، وَغَرْبَ لِسَانِكَ، وَاحْتَرِسْ مِنْ كُلِّ ذلِكَ بِكَفٍّ الْبَادِرَةِ، وَتَأْخِيرِ السَّطْوَةِ، حَتَّى يَسْكُنَ غَضَبُكَ فَتَمْلِكَ الاْخْتِيَارَ، وَلَنْ تَحْكُمْ ذلِكَ مِنْ نَفْسِكَ حَتَّى تُكْثِرَ هُمُومَكَ بِذِكْرِ الْمَعَادِ إِلَى رَبِّكَ."

«Do not appropriate for yourself a bigger share in that which the people have an equal share. Do not show

1. **Bihar al-Anwar**, vol. 88, p. 379.

neglect and ignorance of matters that are clear to the people, because that thing shall be taken away from you and be given to another person, and soon the curtains shall be drawn on all matters and you will be required to redress for the injustices to the oppressed.

Control your anger, harshness, the raising of your hand, lashing out with your tongue, and desist from abusive language and slandering, and keep quiet until your anger subsides, and you regain control over yourself and your judgment sees the truth. You regain your composure when you think of the return to your Creator and increase your anxiety.»

To conclude:

1. Rulers are more prone to despotism than ordinary individuals, and having the means at his disposal, no power except the 'Fear of God' can prevent him from becoming despotic. Thus the ruler is in greater need of strengthening the nature of his *Taqwa*, than others.

2. That which belongs to all the people, needs to be divided equally among them and the ruler cannot assign public property either to himself or to a particular group. In case the ruler does make such a move, it shall be an act of injustice, and the oppressor shall be condemned and punished for the injustice he has committed in a court of justice that shall be set up under the jurisdiction of the oppressed.

3. Respect for public opinion is among the special duties of the popular ruler. If violations of the law, aberrations, moral turpitude and administrative corruptions that are in public view, continue unabated; and the ruler without

regard for public opinion continues to feign neglect and ignorance of them, and fails to reform society, he shall have an ominous fate and a painful end.

4. Considering the fact that the people have made their need known to the ruler and seek to find a solution to their problem through him, they shall not tolerate bad behavior such as anger, indifference etc… from the ruler and shall be deeply affected by the slightest misconduct. Thus, it is necessary that government officials do not injure the people’s sentiments and offend them making them become disillusioned.

Learning and acting according to the Qur’an and traditions of the Prophet (s)

In the chapter, “Place of the Qur’an and Sunnah in Islamic society”, it was said that the Qur’an and the Sunnah are regarded as the source of all societal, economic, political and religious issues. The Islamic ruler must act on the basis of the two aforesaid sources and not violate them, otherwise he shall automatically be dismissed from office.

Imam Ali (‘a) considers it essential and necessary for the ruler to learn lessons from history and past events. Based on this premise, he states:

وَالْوَاجِبُ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ تَتَذَكَّرَ مَا مَضَى لِمَنْ تَقَدَّمَكَ: مِنْ حُكُومَة عَادِلَة، أَوْ سُنَّة فَاضِلَة، أَوْ أَثَر عَنْ نَبِيِّنَاﷺ أَوْفَرِيضَة فِي كِتَابِ الله، فَتَقْتَدِيَ بِمَا شَاهَدْتَ مِمَّا عَمِلْنَا بِهِ فِيهَا، وَتَجْتَهِدَ لِنَفْسِكَ فِي اتِّبَاعِ مَا عَهِدْتُ إِلَيْكَ فِي عهْدِي هذَا، وَاسْتَوْثَقْتُ بِهِ مِنَ الْحُجَّةِ لِنَفْسِي عَلَيْكَ، لِكَيْلاَ تَكُونَ لَكَ

عِلَّةٌ عِنْدَ تَسَرُّعِ نَفْسِكَ إِلَى هَوَاهَا، فَلَنْ يَعْصِمَ مِنَ السُّوءِ وَلاَ يُوَفِّقَ لِلْخَيْرِ إلا اللهُ تَعَالى. وَقَدْ كَانَ فِيما عَهِدَ إليَّ رَسُولُهُ ﷺ فِي وَصَايَاهُ: تَحضيضاً عَلَى الصَّلاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ، فَبِذَلِكَ أَخْتِمُ لَكَ مَا عَهِدَ، وَلا قُوَّةَ إلاَّ بِاللهِ العَظِيمِ".

«It is your duty to remember how just governments worked according to the virtuous traditions of the Prophets ('a), the obligatory acts mentioned in the glorious Qur'an, and methods of the Prophet of Islam (s), written in books. You should follow them in the manner that we have acted upon them and you have witnessed them. Endeavor to follow all that I have incorporated in this order for you and to carry out my instructions. O Malik, with this plea I have strengthened my pact with you and given you the ultimatum so that, if your carnal soul rebels and follows vain desires, you won't have any excuse to offer, even though a human being can neither be safe from evil nor succeed in doing good deeds except by the Will of God.

The Prophet of God (s) would always instruct me that I should be extremely vigilant and careful of my obligatory prayers, my payment of Zakat, and good behavior with my slaves.»

By scrutinizing the words of Imam Ali ('a), we understand that firstly, knowledge of Islamic issues and leeway for implementation of the commandments of God are the most supreme divine ultimatums. With the existence of such ultimatum one cannot refuse, on various baseless grounds, to carry out the commandments of God.

On this basis, Imam Khumayni, the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, at a meeting with clergymen, declared: “Today, the ultimatum has been given, and the ‘Ulema’ (erudite Islamic scholars) have no excuse to offer for not working towards the execution of the commandments of God.”

Secondly, striving towards implementation of God’s commandments should not prevent those in charge from introspection and combating the carnal desires and practicing the individual acts of worship; rather, while working hard at establishing and installing the system, they have a duty to fear God and not neglect performing their religious obligations.

Martyrdom, the destination

One of the exclusive divine blessings for pious believers is martyrdom in the path of God and installation of God’s commandments. Attaining martyrdom is regarded as the climax of man’s spiritual ascent. Consequently, while aspiring for his own and Malik’s martyrdom, Imam Ali (‘a) familiarizes his governor with the potent outcome and effects of supplication. Now that we have reached the end of this writing, we recite together the supplication of His Holiness:

”وَأَنَا أَسْأَلُ اللهَ بِسَعَةِ رَحْمَتِهِ، وَعَظِيمِ قُدْرَتِهِ عَلَى إِعْطَاءِ كُلِّ رَغْبَة، أَنْ يُوَفِّقَنِي وَإِيَّاكَ لِمَا فيهِ رِضَاهُ مِنَ الإِقَامَةِ عَلَى الْعُذْرِ الْوَاضِحِ إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَى خَلْقِهِ، مَعَ حُسْنِ الثَّنَاءِ فِي الْعِبَادِ، وَجَمِيلِ الأَثَرِ فِي الْبِلاَدِ، وَتَمَامِ النِّعْمَةِ، وَتَضْعِيفِ الْكَرَامَةِ، وَأَنْ يَخْتِمَ لِي وَلَكَ بالسَّعَادَةِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ، إِنَّا إِلَيْهِ

رَاجِعُونَ، وَالسَّلاَمُ عَلَى رَسُولِ الله ـ صلّى الله عليه وآله و سلّم ـ الطَّيِّبِينَ الْطَّاهِرِينَ، وَسَلّم تَسْليماً كثيراً، والسّلام".

«I implore Almighty God that with His infinite compassion and enormous power to prompt me and you to do all that earns His consent and pleasure; to accept our proper and humble apology in relation to Him and His creatures; to bring our life to an end with a good name and reputation among His creatures, with good effect on the lands and territories, with increased bounty, greater honor, infinite happiness and with martyrdom – for surely, we belong to God and to Him we return. Salutations to the Prophet of God and his descendants who are immaculate and glorified.»

O, the Creator of the Universe! Accept our invocation.